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# LONDON

*by*

H. G. CORNER



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## INTRODUCTION

IN an age of unrest all good Londoners must welcome Mr. Corner's discovery that "the greatness of London was determined when the ice age dissolved and the sea burst through the last narrow strip of land which joined Britain to the Continent." It is certainly a city which has the gift of holding the affection of its inhabitants. Except to the elect, the first impression is apt to be disappointing. Yet it inspired the art of Whistler; and Monet, as the French exhibition has recorded, found the rarest beauty in its fog. But no one wearies of it. It may lack the superficial charm of other cities. It has not the allure of Paris or the gaiety of Vienna, which, incredible though it seems, survives the tragedy of the war. Still, it is the ideal city to live with. It has all the lasting charm of character and expression, and, like a plain woman with intelligence, is always disclosing fresh beauties to its faithful admirers. The good Londoner may stray in his affections, and waver for a time in æsthetic dalliance abroad, but he is always glad to get back.

There is always room for a book on London. The English are too apt to take their capital for granted, and are too often strangely ignorant of its history and its treasures. How many otherwise intelligent people have never been inside the Soane Museum?

Until recently there has been a deplorable lack of

civic pride in its citizens. For this its duality is largely responsible. The City of London, as such, with its Lord Mayor and Aldermen, has always stood churlishly aloof. At one time the home of civil liberty, it has discreetly relapsed into a comfortable conservatism, with a nice contempt for its neighbour. The world hardly contains a more curious place. In the day the busy mart of the greatest commercial country in the world—at night a desert of stately offices inhabited by caretakers and stray cats: but it still maintains the old and agreeable tradition of national hospitality, and the Lord Mayor is still to the foreigner the symbol of that great national virtue.

For the present and increasing interest in London, the London County Council is largely responsible. At its inception the body was regarded with the greatest suspicion and dislike, the more strange as it displaced an effete and corrupt body, the Metropolitan Board of Works. For long housed in an absurdly inadequate building near Trafalgar Square, it was allowed, with rather a grudging spirit, to move across the Thames. The Council were fortunate in finding Mr. Ralph Knott, a young and almost unknown architect, who gave us that beautiful building for its home, one of the most completely successful of modern buildings of our time.

With the new civic spirit, the public began to take an interest in their city. After the Boer War, one of the oldest and most beautiful buildings in the Tower of London was wantonly destroyed, and a modern red brick excrescence was erected in its

place, to make a new mess room for the troops. Such an outrage would be impossible to-day. The outcry that the proposed destruction of Waterloo Bridge aroused a few years ago showed that the people of London were realizing at last what a precious "Heritage" they had in their city.

Architecturally, the tragedy of London was its rebuilding after the Great Fire. If Sir Christopher Wren had been given a free hand, what a city he would have made! Never had architect such a chance, but pettifogging economy stood in the way, and even did its best to spoil St. Paul's.

Another misfortune was the development of London in the Belgravian district. It came at a time of dull and uninspired architecture. The Victorian taste was tired of the Georgian and suspected the Regency, and so another chance was lost. Nor was the later development of South Kensington much more fortunate, for though it included some admirable work, as a whole it was hardly a success, and life is not long enough to get over the depression caused by the first apprehension of the Cromwell Road. Of late years all this has changed. Mayfair is now being rebuilt, and, with some unfortunate exceptions, the result is satisfactory. A very difficult task has been approached with taste and discretion. Those responsible have managed to show that modern requirements are not inconsistent with beauty of form and design.

There is one quality in which London stands alone. It is an ideal town to explore on foot, as it hardly possesses one straight street. The fortunate pedestrian spends his time going round corners.



His pilgrimage is full of surprises, and nearly always agreeable ones.

Even the most important streets are contrived without a vista. Whitehall is so ingeniously laid out that you cannot see the Houses of Parliament or Westminster Abbey at any point until they burst upon the delighted traveller. Charming Bond Street meanders gracefully up its hill without affording a monotonous view of brick and mortar.

This habit of its streets agreeably recalls to the jaded townsman the country-side, with its wandering lanes and roads which, in the interests of private ownership, take a long and devious route before you reach your destination.

This is why the English have all been great walkers, and still are, in spite of their natural enemies, the motorists, those arrogant supermen who resent such simple pleasures, and kill for their own ends some six thousand fellow-citizens a year, who are unreasonable enough to think they have any right on a public highway they help to maintain.

Mr. Corner in his volume on London in the English Heritage Series, has done his work admirably. It is remarkable how much information and entertainment he has managed to introduce in its 174 pages. No one who reads it will fail to find his interest in the greatest city of the world confirmed and stimulated. He helps us all to realize how wise was one of the greatest of all Londoners, Dr. Johnson, when he said:

"The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say there is more learning and science within the

circumference of ten miles from where we now sit than in all the rest of the Kingdom," and to agree with his conclusion, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life: for there is in London all that life can afford."

CHARTRES BIRON.

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# LONDON

## CHAPTER I

### *PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN LONDON*

THE greatness of London was determined when the last Ice Age dissolved and the sea burst through the last narrow strip of land which joined Britain to the Continent and separated the North Sea from the Atlantic Ocean. Its position at the head of a broad estuary, up which the tide will easily carry the frail barks of the earliest seamen, and down which the ebb tide will crawl to the ocean,

“While the pale waste widens around us  
and the banks fade dimmer away,”

and debouch opposite the ports of the Gauls, whence prehistoric trade routes will take the traveller and his goods to the civilized world, was but one factor in its subsequent commercial importance. Its mild and healthy climate, the fertile lands by which it was surrounded, above all, the coincidence of high and dry land on either bank of the river just where that river begins to be of manageable width: all contributed to that end. The two low hills on the north bank, opposite a solid spit of gravel, seemed to invite a bridge, and this was the site the Romans chose as a crossing-place when they built the great road from Dover to Verulam, which our Saxon fathers called Watling Street.

It is not difficult to construct a picture of the tract of land now covered by the streets and houses of Greater London.<sup>1</sup> Through the centre runs the Thames, following much the same course as now. Its breadth, however, is greater, and on either bank are marshes and pools of water, widening at high tide into lagoons, save where the two hills rise on the north side behind a line of cliffs, which stretches along the Strand towards Westminster. That line of cliffs is still distinct for all men to see, while the London County Council tramways burrow through them; and the two hills are crowned, the western by St. Paul's Cathedral, the eastern by St. Peter's, Cornhill—the two earliest church sites in London. The hills are divided by a stream, to be called the Walbrook, which runs into the Thames by Cannon Street Station. Another stream, afterwards known as the Fleet, and in its upper reaches the River of Wells or Oldbourne, washes the foot of the western hill. Farther west, where the river makes its great bend southward, comes in another stream with delta-like mouth enclosing an island, Thorney Island, on which will rise the Abbey Church of Westminster. This stream will be known as the Tyburn, and a twin stream, farther west still, will be called the Westbourne, and make its way to the marshlands of Pimlico. All these rivers still remain, mostly in the form of sewers, though the last has one crowded hour of glorious life when it comes up into the sun as the Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park. Eastward from the twin hills the land drops to a de-

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent description see Mrs. Ormsby's *London on the Thames*.

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent description see Mrs. Ormsby's *London on the Thames*.

pression occupied by a stream known later in its northern course as the Shoreditch, then rises again to the high land of Stepney and Bow till it reaches the boundary, where Middlesex and London end in the flat expanse of the Lea Valley, through which flows the broad and sluggish Lea, the largest of all our London tributaries, and the only one still known to commerce and sport. With the exception of this last, these streams all take their rise in the ridge which forms the northern rim of our London basin and culminates in the heights of Hampstead and Highgate, where beds of sand and gravel top the prevailing London clay, prevent the erosion which has worn away the inner plain, and create the springs which are the sources of the streams. From these hills the country slopes plateau-like towards the Thames, and the rivers divide this plateau into four spurs, the contours of which are represented by Campden Hill, Finchley Road, Primrose Hill and Pentonville Hill; and the land is high and dry, save for the tracts of marshland at the mouths of the Lea, the Tyburn, and the Westbourne.

The picture of the south presents much the same features. There is a similar ridge of sand-capped hills running through Richmond Park, Wimbledon Common, Tooting Common and Blackheath, making the southern ridge of the basin and providing the same heath-like landscape, but the land between these and the river is much more marshy. The tributaries on this side rise from hills farther south, the spurs of the North Downs. These rivers, the Ravensbourne, the Wandle and the Beverley Brook, cut the southern heights into separate blocks, and

while the northern tributaries exist mostly in sewers, these still carry on the natural and proper function of rivers, to provide delight and beauty. One smaller stream, the Efra, rises in the Southern Heights and flows into the Thames at Vauxhall; it is now confined to a sewer, whence it occasionally breaks loose. The tract of land within the great bow of the river is marsh, covered with rank grass and osiers and dotted with islets (Kennington, Rotherhithe, Newington, Bermondsey), bounded by a line of higher ground—Denmark Hill, Brixton Hill, Clapham Rise—ending in the west in a line of cliffs overlooking the Battersea marshes, heights which are still plainly discernible from the South-Western Railway, which runs across the marshes between cliffs and river.

The persistence of these geographical features, so curiously perpetuated in names that have no conceivable descriptive value in the London of to-day—Lambeth Lower Marsh, Notting Dale, Hackney Downs—but which win significance from the sketch I have just given, is a symbol of the continuity of London's history. When and by whom the site was first inhabited is still a matter of controversy, but the beginnings were probably much more remote from the Roman foundation than that event is from our own time. Palæolithic man roamed the Thames valley with the mammoth and the woolly rhinoceros during the third interglacial period. He hunted and fished on the site of London, but he made no buildings or permanent settlement, and about twelve thousand years B.C. he was supplanted by men of the Neolithic culture who came across the

land bridge from the Continent. They also chipped flints for knives and tools, but not so beautifully as their predecessors; but they also brought with them the art of cultivating cereals and domesticating animals. At this time the land was gradually sinking, the valley of the great river into which the Thames flowed became submerged, and the waters of the North Sea flowed into the English Channel. Britain became an island and its history began.

The inhabitants of this island at the time of Cæsar's invasion were a Celtic race, closely akin to the Gallic tribes which had offered such a fierce resistance to that conquering hero. They had passed through the ages of bronze and iron, and had been for some centuries a semi-civilized race, although they preferred to adorn and clothe themselves in barbaric fashion when they went to war. At least in the maritime countries opposite Gaul they were agriculturists and traders. They had a gold coinage of considerable beauty, and their metal work with spiral decoration and enamelled ornament was not unworthy to be compared with any produced in that morning of the world. It is, then, quite probable that so convenient and commanding a site as that on which London stands was inhabited from very early times, at least by fishermen. But the evidence for a really effective occupation is difficult to get at and to decipher. The very origin of its name is unknown. That it is Celtic is certain,<sup>1</sup> and the fact that the

<sup>1</sup> It has been derived from the Celtic words *Llyn-din* (the lake foot), but the most likely suggestion is that of Dr. Henry Bradley, who considers it to have been derived from a certain "*Londinos*," whose tribe or family once possessed it.



Romans called it Londinium, and subsequently bestowed upon it the name of Augusta in recognition of its greatness, warrants us in attributing to it an importance of long standing at the time of the Roman conquest. There are two other undoubted Celtic names embedded in London nomenclature, that of Lud, a quite notable god of the Celts who lives for ever in Ludgate, and Belinus, a minor god on whom Billingsgate market has conferred the necessary immortality.

What turned Cæsar's attention to Britain was the same consideration that afterwards determined the Danes to take possession of the island, and that was its strategic value in relation to the Gauls. In 54 B.C., after a reconnaissance in the preceding year, Cæsar landed in Kent. As he advanced inland along the line of the Downs, he had a view of the broad estuary of the Thames on his right, and made for the one place at which he saw the river could be forded, perhaps at Chelsea, perhaps at Brentford; but London does not come into the picture. Cæsar stayed but to defeat Cassivellaunus, the king of the Trinobantes, and then left our island to itself while he advanced to meet his own tragic end. But nearly one hundred years later, when the Roman republic had become an empire and the able Emperor Claudius was seated on its throne, that potentate decided to resume the work of Cæsar and sent an army under Aulus Plautius to reduce the island. On this occasion London was the first objective and formed the base of operations. One day the archæologists may be able to tell us for certain whether there was then a bridge over the Thames,

and who built it. There are some indications, but no direct evidence, that such existed. Certainly there is no good reason why the Britons, who were adepts in the art of pile driving, should not have built a bridge on this inviting spot, and there is every reason why the Romans with their engineering experience should have done so if it had not existed before.<sup>1</sup> However that may be, in a few years London became a thriving Roman city, though not at first of the importance of Camulodunum or Verulam. But all three were destined to be overwhelmed in a common destruction when Boadicea (Boudicca), the widowed queen of a powerful British tribe, the Icenî, infuriated by intolerable wrongs, brought together the still fierce Celtic tribes in a great rebellion against the Roman authority (A.D. 66). London, the brand-new city, went up in flames, the Roman general, Suetonius Paulinus, having discreetly retired to let the fury work itself out, preferring to sacrifice a city to a province. And so, on the threshold of her history, the first recorded event is one that remains almost unique in that history, her capture—and that, too, by a woman. The masculine character of the great town was thus early indicated. However, London was soon reoccupied; the heroic Boadicea relieved her victors of the responsibility of punishing her by committing suicide.

London was rebuilt, and for the next three hundred years experienced a period of repose and prosperity hardly equalled since. During the first

<sup>1</sup> See an interesting discussion of the subject in Gordon Home's *Roman London*.

half of that period it shared in the blessing of peace enjoyed throughout the Empire under the Antonines. It became a typical Roman city with its forum and its temple, and was originally confined to the high ground east of Walbrook. But it rapidly spread westward towards the Fleet, and when the wall was built it occupied some 330 acres. Beyond this spread the suburbs, the usual pomerium or orchard and market gardens outside the western walls, with more distant villas on the pleasant hills of Surrey. There was a Basilica, some remains of which exist. It crowned the eastern hill, where Leadenhall Market now stands, in a direct line due north from the bridge, and was at least 350 feet long. No amphitheatre has been discovered, but an ingenious archæologist<sup>1</sup> has suggested that the natural amphitheatre that rises above the east side of Farringdon Street to the top of Old Bailey was the arena for the gladiatorial combats and other sports which must have been held somewhere. Quite early in her career she became the recognized capital and the focus of the magnificent road system with which the Romans endowed the country. There must have been a bridge connecting the city with the trans-riverine suburb of Southwark and the road to the coast, for "as long as there was no bridge the great object of Roman rule remained unfulfilled. This object was the completion of a system of roads connecting all parts of the Empire with Rome."<sup>2</sup> In the bed of the river under old London Bridge have been found numbers of Roman coins of all dates,

<sup>1</sup> Roach-Smith.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*: Article "London."

even back to the Republic. Were they dropped in when the citizens were paying the toll or flung in as a propitiatory offering to the river god? At least three of these great arterial roads of Britain crossed each other at London. They were (1) the Watling Street which came from the Kentish ports, crossed the Thames and ran north-west into Wales; (2) the Stane Street which began at Chichester and, passing through London, became the Ermine Street going to York; (3) the Colchester Road which emerged on the western side of London as the Akeman Street, the road to Silchester.

At some time during the Roman occupation London was surrounded by a wall, but whether this was after the Boadicean revolt or later in the troubled times of the fourth century is still a matter of controversy. "A mere hole left in the wall that the Walbrook might flow through to the Thames has given the solution to an ages old puzzle. In flood time, silt and sand gathered deeply against the external face of the wall, and a thick deposit of debris subsequently accumulated above this silt has yielded Roman relics of the first century. Accordingly the wall itself cannot be later than the first century."<sup>1</sup> The evidence is perhaps in favour of the earlier date. But there is no doubt as to its course. Fairly extensive remains still exist under and above ground. Starting from the Tower of London there is a small fragment embedded in the Wardrobe Tower. In Postern Row is a portion bricked up in a bonded warehouse. North-west it runs to where there is a section standing in Trinity Place, another

<sup>1</sup> Walter Bell: *London Rediscoveries*.

portion forms the dividing wall between the bonded vaults of Messrs. Barber & Co., and the houses of The Crescent; at the junction of Crutched Friars a fine piece of wall is built into the structure of Roman Wall House. Along Jewry Street the wall underlies the fronts of the houses on the east side, the pavement of which is higher than on the other side. Here the wall takes a more westerly turn along Duke Street and Camomile Street, across Bishopsgate passage, under the houses on the north side of Wormwood Street to Allhallows Church, the north side of which is built on it; and so is the Churchyard wall. The wall crosses Moorgate Street on the site of Moorgate. Along London Wall the base of the wall still serves as a foundation for the houses on the north side. Here in St. Alphage's Churchyard is visible a long piece of wall which claims to be the old Roman wall, but there is none above ground. (The existing interesting fragment topped by brick battlements is mediæval.) Passing along Hart Street the wall makes a right-angled turn south at St. Giles' Churchyard, in which there is a bastion, till south of Falcon Square it turns abruptly west, crosses Aldersgate on the site of the gate, and forms the south boundary of St. Botolph's Churchyard. It keeps west in a direct line through the yard of the General Post Office, where a portion of the wall and a bastion are visible, after which it turns suddenly due south, crosses Newgate Street and runs to Ludgate Hill, at the backs of the houses in Warwick Square where there is a fragment to be seen. From Ludgate Hill its course is doubtful and there are no remains of a wall protecting the river front, the

existence of which is therefore uncertain but probable.<sup>1</sup> There were gates at Aldgate, Bishops-gate, Newgate and Ludgate, and a postern at Aldermanbury.

The wall was about three miles in length and, as we have seen, enclosed a space of some 330 acres, an area much larger than that of any other Roman-British town, larger than all but four of the Imperial towns of Gaul and Germany. London never attained the dignity of a *colonia*, a *municipium*, or a *civitas*, but her importance as a trading station was such that she became the richest and most populous city of the island, and, later, the centre of the financial administration and the seat of a bishopric, which distinctions she has never lost.

And so she throve and prospered—so much so that she does not appear again in the pages of history until the rebellion of Carausius, who mutinied against the Emperor Maximianus in 289, made himself an independent emperor and established a mint in London. Those were troubled days for the Roman Empire. The long peace of the Antonines had gone; nothing like it was ever to return; and we are now approaching the age of Constantine, the recognition of the Christian religion and the final downfall. In 296 Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine, and his abler general, Asclepiodotus, made London the centre of their successful campaign against Allectus, successor of the murdered Carausius. Him they defeated and slew, but the troubled times had come to stay.

<sup>1</sup> For these details of the course of the wall, see the *Victoria County History of London*.

## LONDON

Constantine himself was here later, having been proclaimed Emperor in Britain where his father died. He may have built the walls; villa building was active and wealth increased. But after the middle of the fourth century there was danger and the menace of danger all round. In the disastrous year 367, the Picts and Scots captured the *Dux Britanniarum* (the commander of the northern frontier), and the Saxons slew the *Comes Littoris Saxonici*, who had charge of the coastal defences. The Spaniard Theodosius, father of him who became the Emperor from dissolution, was put in command. He drove at the marauders and "joyful and triumphant he made his entry into the city which had just before been overwhelmed by disasters, but was now suddenly re-established before it could have hoped for deliverance."<sup>1</sup> But the period of peace was short-lived. Another usurping emperor, Maximus, appeared in London. He reigned for five years, from 383 to 387, and began the ominous process of withdrawing troops from Britain. From then onwards the position was very acute. The Irish took a hand in harassing the wealthy but helpless land, the best soldiers were drawn off to save the crumbling Roman Empire, and during the deadly struggle in which the Empire was engaged for this half-century the Romans faded away from this island. London must have seen them depart with feelings of dazed bewilderment.

But now complete silence falls upon London.

<sup>1</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, quoted by Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.

Movements were going on throughout Britain. A British chief from Wales called Vortigern calls in the Saxons. Somewhere in England a semi-mythical King Arthur is fighting the Saxons. In 457 we read that the Britons, flying before the forces of Henghist, fled to London, and from that date to 596 there is again complete silence.

Of what happened during that long period we know nothing. When London again stands in the light of recorded history, she is a Saxon town with, as we shall see, a peculiar and special position and evidently thought of by the able bureaucracy of the Papacy as suitable for an Archbishop's see. Some of the greatness that clung about her in the days when she had been the main objective of aspiring candidates for the purple still lingered. It is unlikely, therefore, that in the intervening period London was a desolate and ruined city. That she did not undergo capture by the Saxons, with its inevitable accompaniment of a thorough sacking, seems certain from the fact that no mention is made of it by any of the meagre authorities from whom we derive our shadowy knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon conquest. It is more than likely that her old Roman municipal life was carried on on a restricted basis. It would pay the Saxon tribes to leave her alone and exact what revenue they could from her trading profits, while pursuing their slow but relentless conquest of the surrounding country.

The structural relics of Roman London are scanty. Besides the fragments of the wall there are only visible a building under the Coal Exchange in Lower Thames Street with a hypocaust, a brick pier



under a shop at the corner of Gracechurch Street and Central Avenue, and a portion of walling under 50 Cornhill. There is the famous London Stone, built into the south wall of St. Swithin's Church, Cannon Street, which is supposed to have been the *milliarum* of the Roman forum in London from which the distances along the various British highroads were reckoned. In Strand Lane is the so-called Roman bath, which the Historical Monuments Commission thinks is not Roman at all. Innumerable pieces of pottery, implements, coins, etc., have been dug up and may now be pondered over in the Guildhall, London, and British Museums. Among the most noteworthy are an ornate piece of tessellated pavement found in Bucklersbury, now in the Guildhall, and the remains of a boat found in the River Thames, now in the London Museum.

This is all that is left us of our connection with the Roman world empire, which lasted for a period nearly as long as that from the accession of Elizabeth to the present time.

## CHAPTER II

### *LONDON IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES*

**S**UDDENLY the veil is lifted, and in 597 London emerges as an important city; for Pope Gregory VII, who despatched Augustine to England to convert to Christianity the countrymen of the fair-haired boys he had seen exposed for sale in Rome, advised the establishment of an Archbishopric in London and another at York. It is true that Augustine chose Canterbury, the capital of his patron king, Ethelbert of Kent, for his own archiepiscopal see, but he appointed one of his companions, Mellitus, to be Bishop of London, in 604. Ethelbert saw to the building of a church on the top of the hill above Ludgate on which tradition says the Romans had erected a Temple of Diana. There is no evidence of this, but it may well be so, for to what better purpose could so conspicuous a site be put?

For some two and a half centuries London seems to have escaped serious trouble. In the feuds of the Heptarchy she passed from king to king, though generally she was secure as a dependency on the great Mercian kings, but in 851 a great disaster, the worst that had befallen her since the revolt of Boadicea, left her a blackened ruin.

“The Northmen came about the land,  
A Christless chivalry.”

It was they who did this thing, and it was mainly to them, perhaps, that we owe the disappearance of Roman London.

For some years after this London was in a miserable condition, but better times were coming when the heroic King Alfred turned the tables on the Danes. In 868 he won back London, which they had been using as a base for their devastation. From then onwards her story is one of peaceful development as a thoroughly English city, varied with plague and fire as inevitable incidents in a wooden-built town of such crowded streets, varied likewise in the remaining years of the Saxon rule by heroic defence of the city against the Danes.

The pusillanimous Ethelred sat on the throne of Alfred, and his instrument of defence was not the sword and dyke, but the moneybags of the London citizens. Even as they counted out the gold they had to pay over in ransom, the fierce horde murdered the Archbishop Alphege at their hustings at Greenwich, almost within sight of the trembling merchants. The Anglo-Saxon chronicle relates a curious and not entirely credible story, under the year 1014, when London was under the dominance of the Danish King Sweyn, of how King Olaf of Norway, in alliance with the miserable Ethelred, sailed up the river with his men, laid their cables round the piers of the bridge, and then rowed downstream "as hard as they could." The result was such a loosening of the piers that the bridge, crowded with the London defenders, gave way and was broken down. True or not, the incident lives in the ballad of *London Bridge is Broken Down* (Dance

*o'er my Lady Lee*), the first line of which actually occurs in an epic of the Icelandic scald, Snorri Sturlason:

“London Bridge is broken down,  
Gold is won and high renown,”  
etc.

Two years later when Cnut, Sweyn's son, failed to force the bridge he had a canal cut from Bermondsey to Lambeth, through which he carried his troops above the bridge from his headquarters at Greenwich, and then constructed earthworks round the city from the west side. But the citizens resisted his assaults valiantly, and were at length relieved by the stout warrior Edmund Ironside.

When after the death of that last of the great fighting Kings of Wessex England had to raise a sum of 82,500 pounds of silver for the payment of Cnut's mercenaries, London's share of this ransom was 10,500, which is very significant of the position of the town in this period. Moreover, London was now becoming recognized as the capital of the kingdom, although the administrative centre was Winchester, and the kings were crowned at Kingston; and it was in one of her suburbs, Lambeth, that the Danish King Harthacnut met his death from too royal an indulgence in drink. It was at this period too that Edward the Confessor commenced to build the magnificent Abbey at Westminster on Thorney Island. Of this first abbey church nothing remains above ground, except the undercroft to the monks' dormitory and a few fragments, but

Edward's choice of this site made Westminster the administrative centre of the kingdom, which it has ever since remained. It is a sign of the independent position of London that the sovereign governed from outside the capital city. London has remained the one capital city of Western civilization where the governmental centre is not within the city.

From the time of its rehabilitation by King Alfred, under the protection of his powerful successors and of the great King Cnut, London had had two hundred years of growth in wealth. But the royal line of Wessex was now degenerate. The family of the upstart Godwin was seizing the reins of power and the most momentous change in the history of England was at hand. When, therefore, the citizens of London, one day in October 1066, saw the straggling survivors of the battle of Hastings streaming into their city over London Bridge, amongst them their gallant portreeves Ansgar and Ulf, they were not long in making up their minds that the powerful Duke of Normandy was the man for their money. They recognized in him the strong man for the troubled times, and a representative deputation of citizens headed by Ansgar waited upon William at Berkhamstead and handed over to him the city—with due guarantees. With it went the kingdom.

The charter which was granted to the Londoners is important enough and short enough to be quoted here. It is in the possession of the City Corporation, and is written on a strip of parchment six inches long.

"William, King, greets William, Bishop, and Godfregth, Portreeve, and all the burghers within Londone, French and English, friendly. And I do you to wit that I will that ye be all law worthy that were in King Edward's day. And I will that every child be his father's heir after his father's day. And I will not endure that any man offer any wrong to you. God keep you."

But the stern administrator was taking no chances nor assuming that this conciliatory act would render re-insurance unnecessary. To overawe any citizens who might be indisposed to acquiesce in the Norman rule he soon after commissioned the architect prelate Gundulf, Bishop of Rochester, to build him a great fortress in the south-east angle of the Roman wall, and, within it, a keep. Thus arose the White Tower of the Tower of London. It was built of white Caen stone brought from Normandy, the first time this material was used in London. It stands a magnificent monument of early Norman architecture, containing several great halls and the Chapel of St. John, beautiful in its naked simplicity, with its strong, sturdy columns, the oldest place of worship in London. The main line of fortifications, as now seen, dates from the thirteenth century, the outer line with its towers and gateways belongs to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The great moat around the outer fortifications was constructed by Edward I. It took twelve years to complete, and in 1928, the flood year, Londoners were able to see it as it was then, filled with water. Not a century has passed without some addition to the buildings. Its

use as a palace, a prison, and a fortress, its continuous history of gloom and horror, and its fine state of preservation make the Tower of London the most valuable monument of mediæval military architecture surviving in this country.

At the same time was begun that spacious Norman Cathedral of St. Paul's, "wonderful for height, length, and breadth," says Stow, which had its origin in one of those disastrous fires which frequently swept the thatched town, and which totally destroyed the Saxon St. Paul's in 1086. The new Norman nave was begun by Bishop Maurice in that year. It was on so vast a scale that it took centuries to complete it. It was 600 feet long, so that, while its eastern, northern and southern extremities correspond approximately to those of the present building, its western front stood 100 feet west of Wren's. Generation after generation of Londoners watched it being built, altered, and rebuilt. They saw it begun in the Norman style, added to in the Early English, and finished off in the Decorated. By the close of the thirteenth century it was finished; its crowning glory, the shingled spire which reached higher into the heavens than any other spire in Christendom (489 feet) was completed in 1315. So it stood until lightning struck it in 1561. It was not rebuilt, for the whole fabric was in a state of decay which necessitated the attention of Inigo Jones, who added classical porticoes to the west, north and south fronts. Finally, Christopher Wren was called in, and just before the great fire of 1666 led to complete rebuilding, he had already planned a great central

dome. Of all the departed mediæval glories of London that thirteenth-century cathedral was the most wonderful; but if the Renaissance was to impose its porticoes and domes much better was it that the whole fabric should come down to give place to the perfect classical memorial Wren has left us.

Other great churches were rising, the outward expression of those religious and artistic impulses which swayed the eager minds of the peoples of that age devoid of science and its machines. Under the Norman kings London grew in wealth and prosperity. Henry I granted its citizens a charter which gave them the right of electing their own sheriff, and returned to them the lordship over the County of Middlesex. A good deal of history of which we know little lies behind this charter.

London in Saxon times was the point at which three kingdoms met: Kent, Mercia, and Essex. Amidst the permutations and combinations of the heptarchy she had sometimes belonged to one, sometimes to the other, maintaining always a position of quasi-independence and surrounded by a territory which bore the significant name of Middlesex. This charter of Henry I brings Middlesex definitely under the jurisdiction of London, thereby reviving a privilege that had existed in Roman times. Moreover it granted the citizens the right to choose their own portreeve and a sheriff for Middlesex, a privilege for which they had to pay the next King Stephen one hundred marks.

The anarchy of this king's reign, when Stephen and Matilda were fighting for the crown, did not



cause more than a ripple in the current of London's prosperous development. Matilda deprived London of its charters and treated it as a "desmesne," which foolish action was a chief factor in the ultimate triumph of Stephen.

To the next reign we owe a charming picture of London and the life of her citizens contained in the biography of Thomas à Becket, written by that proud prelate's secretary and faithful adherent, William Fitzstephen. We may well pause here to get a glimpse of that twelfth-century town, for it is the earliest extant account of any European mediæval city. Fitzstephen tells us that besides the Cathedral of St. Paul's, there were in London and the suburbs (the estimated population of which at the time was 40,000), thirteen larger conventual churches, besides one hundred and thirty-six lesser parochial ones. (This gives us an average area of three acres per parish.) "The Thames abounds with fish." "On the north side are fields for pasture and a delightful plain of flat meadow land, interspersed with flowing streams, on which stand mills whose clack is very pleasing to the ear. Close by lies an immense forest (Enfield Chase) in which are densely wooded thickets, the coverts of game, stags, fallow deer, boars and wild bulls." The three principal churches, he tells us, possess celebrated schools. "The boys of the different schools wrangle with each other in verse, and contend about the principles of grammar or the rules of the perfect and future tenses." "The artizans of the several crafts, the vendors of the various commodities and the labourers of every kind, have each their separate stations. . . . There is

also on the bank of the river amongst the wine-shops which are kept in ships and cellars, a public eating-house: there, every day, according to the season, may be found viands of all kinds; roast, fried and boiled, fish large and small, coarser meat for the poor and more delicate for the rich, such as venison, fowls and small birds." There is Smithfield in the suburb, "a certain smooth field where is a show of well-bred horses exposed for sale every Friday." And he goes on with relish to describe the horses, their paces, their breed, and their jockeys. All kinds of sports are practised in the fields round the city. There are football and cock-fighting and sham fights, leaping, archery, wrestling. "Cytherea leads the dances of the maidens." Fat bulls and hogs intended for bacon "are baited." "When that great marsh which washes the walls of the city on the north side [Moorfields] is frozen over, the young men go out in crowds to divert themselves upon the ice." It may be observed that this marsh was a result of the stopping up of the culverts under which the Walbrook flowed through the walls into the city, an example of the ruin into which the efficient engineering of the Romans had been allowed to decay. Here the apprentices practised skating, "binding under their feet the shinbones of some animal." The skaters had a pleasant game in which they clashed, raised their poles, and struck to the great bodily hurt of one or both. It is a vivid picture of the boisterous, exuberant life of the high noon of the Middle Ages. There is no trace of gloom upon the picture. "The only inconveniences of London are, the immodest drinking of foolish persons and the frequent fires."

The awful stench in vain assailed noses indifferent through familiarity, even as we have become inured to petrol fumes. Fitzstephen gives also the best evidence we have for the existence of a wall on the river side. "The Thames . . . has in a long space of time washed down, undermined, and subverted the walls in that part."

On the whole London in the days of Becket was pleasanter and safer to live in than most Continental cities of its size. Becket himself, although the son of a Norman Londoner, Gilbert, who had reached the office of portreeve, the highest civic position at a period when the office of mayor was unknown, had very little to do with London after his early schooling at Merton Priory.<sup>1</sup> The contemporary bishop, Gilbert Foliot, his great opponent, was of a somewhat similar type, strenuous and masterful, and spent his episcopal life in endeavouring to secure the transfer of the archiepiscopal see from Canterbury to London.

These were indeed great days for London. The coming of the Normans had infused a fresh vitality into a nation whose originally vigorous stock showed signs of degeneracy, and in no direction was this new energy more strikingly displayed than in the building activity in London, that is so marked a feature of this time. The Norman Conquest of England coincided with an early Renaissance which sent through all Christendom a glow of fervour in religion, art and scholarship; which manifested itself in the great monastic reforms associated with

<sup>1</sup> Merton Priory is just outside the county. It was a famous school and gave its name to a famous Oxford College.

the names of Cluny, Chartreuse and Citeaux, and which exhausted itself in the wild passion of the crusades. These movements were cosmopolitan. England, owing to its insular position, stood a little apart, and was the first to exhibit those signs of nationality the insurgence of which eventually broke up the mediæval conception. But London had its full share in the urge towards a fuller and more intellectual life. As we have seen she was crowded with churches, and as these were always being burnt down and as the enthusiasm of the day insisted on their being built on ever larger and more magnificent scale, bricklayers, sculptors and masons, carpenters and wood carvers, weavers, dyers and illuminators, were kept feverishly busy on these and on the great conventual houses which now began to raise their splendid edifices in and around the city. Amongst these the most imposing was the priory of Bermondsey (Cluniac) founded in 1082 by Aylwin Child, a name which denoted noble birth. Its site is now marked only by the fragments of a gateway incorporated in the wall of a house (7 Grange Walk), and by the street nomenclature in Abbey Street and Grange Road. The glory of this Abbey covering the flats of Bermondsey, which the monks set themselves to drain and cultivate, and looking across the silver river to the frowning battlements of the Tower is utterly lost; but of another great house at the opposite corner of the city an impressive monument remains. This was the Augustinian Priory of St. Bartholomew, built on the smooth field or Smith-field, which Fitzstephen told us was the great playground of the London citizens. It was founded in

1123 by Rahere, the minstrel of Henry I, who, becoming devout, entered the Augustinian Order of canons regular. The parish church of St. Bartholomew the Great is the choir of that great priory church. Its huge piers, gloomy aisles, and bright clerestory embody more vividly than any other London monument the spirit of their day; and the fifteenth-century tomb of the founder in the sanctuary and the lovely oriel window of the sixteenth-century Prior Bolton opposite add a touch of grace and fancy to the solemn dignity of the Norman choir. Other Augustinian foundations of this time were Holy Trinity in Aldgate, the richest of them all, and St. Mary Overie, the priory church of which has now become the Southwark Cathedral, and of which there are but a few fragments of the Norman church left. St. Paul's, too, was served by Augustinian canons in contrast to the great Benedictine Abbey of Westminster. London itself had no Benedictine foundations until the Cluniac reform of that order. One great religious house established before the Conquest (1056), that of St. Martin's le Grand, of which no vestige is left, for some centuries played an important, if unhelpful, part in the life of the city. It had the right of sanctuary and was the source of endless trouble to the city magistracy. Here died Miles Forest, one of the murderers of the princes in the Tower; and here Richard Crookback brought Anne Neville whom he had found disguised as a kitchen-maid, and whom he subsequently married.

The combination of the monastic with the military spirit, two complexes which make up so much of the psychology of the Middle Ages, pro-

duced those early exponents of the cult of muscular Christianity, the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem and the Knights Templars. Both established branches in London. Jordan Briset and his wife Muriel in 1100 founded the Hospital of St. John outside the walls of the city in the open country to the north-east, not far from where Rahere's Priory was to be built twenty-three years later. Around the buildings of the priory, where devout warriors tended the sick, practised feats of arms and followed the Augustinian rule, grew up the village of Clerkenwell, which became in later centuries a fashionable suburb, and has gradually passed into its present somewhat dishevelled condition. The crypt of the Norman Church of St. John still exists, but all else is gone, save the fine gateway with lateral turrets which stands across St. John's Lane; but this was built later by Prior Docwra in 1504. The subsequent uses of this gate are interesting. The rooms above were occupied by Cave, the founder of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and here Dr. Johnson worked; and within recent years it has reverted to the pacific side of its original purpose, for it is the headquarters of the new Order of St. John, which specializes in ambulance work, the English branch of the Order having been deprived of its land by Henry VIII, but never formally suppressed.

The brilliant and exciting career of the Templars commenced a quarter of a century after that of their rivals. They began as a military order pledged to the pious task of protecting the pilgrims who flocked to the Holy Sepulchre after the first Crusade. They quickly became wealthy and magnificent, and

settled in London somewhere about 1128 to the south of Holborn, where they had an orchard (part of Lincoln's Inn Fields) and built a round church. By 1162 they had outgrown this site. They sold it to the Bishop of Lincoln and moved south. A splendid property between Fleet Street and the river was acquired, a noble sweep of land on which they erected monastic buildings and the beautiful Temple church, one of the five "round" churches of England built on the model of the Holy Sepulchre. It has been heavily restored, but still retains the handsome, though mouldering, great west door and nine fine monuments of knights in the armour of the thirteenth century. There is a beautiful arcade of interlacing arches, and other excellent transitional features, which make this church extraordinarily interesting architecturally. The history of the Templars, their tragic fall under imputations of abominable crimes, such as the practice of black magic, and one, much more serious and less doubtful—the possession of enormous wealth, are part of the history of Christendom. For a century and a half they had occupied these pleasant gardens and stately buildings alongside the water highway, with their tilt yard on the site of the present Law Courts; and then their wealth passed to their rivals the Hospitallers; although, as the money had to pass through the hands of the Pope and the king, not much reached the legal beneficiaries. Subsequently, the estates passed into the hands of the two legal societies, those of the Middle and Inner Temple, which still hold "the fairest site in Europe."

Meanwhile, the recurrence of terrible conflagra-

tions and the consequent danger to the fair new churches, inspired the zealous administrators of the day to pass what has been called the earliest English Building Act, known as FitzAilwyne's Assize. This Act, drawn up in 1189, gently suggested the advisability of building houses of stone, because "it often happened that when a fire arose in the city and burnt many edifices and had reached a house (built of stone) not being able to injure it, it then became extinguished, so that many neighbours' houses were wholly saved from fire by that house." In the Middle Ages it was one thing to pass a law and another thing to enforce it, and we are not surprised to learn that the act was ineffectual. The zeal of our city fathers was in excess of their administrative capacity or of the means by which decrees could be made effective. In 1212 the assize was re-enacted with compulsory regulations. The helplessness of the citizens in dealing with these conflagrations in the days before fire brigades and water supply is pathetically evident in the ruthless device that was adopted of destroying the houses on each side of the burning area. Each ward was to provide a strong iron hook with a wooden handle, two chains, and two strong cords, which were to be left in charge of the beadle of the ward, who also was provided with a "good loudly sounding horn."

The most memorable work of this constructive age was the erection of the famous London Bridge. In 1176 Peter of Colechurch, Bridge Master and Rector of St. Mary Colechurch, who had already spent much time and energy in reconstructing the old timber bridge, now in a hopeless state, com-



menced the erection of the great new stone bridge, destined to stand for more than six hundred years. It is not easy for us to realize the magnitude of the task on which the heroic bridge master embarked. No one in Europe had built a stone bridge of any size since the Romans, there was no stone readily available, and making foundations in the broad tidal waters of the Thames with the primitive tools then available was a task of extraordinary difficulty. Thirty-three years it took to complete the work, and Peter died before it was finished. There were twenty-two arches, and over the central pier stood a beautiful chapel in the new pointed style dedicated to St. Thomas. In this chapel the bones of the builder were laid. No sooner was the bridge built than people began to erect houses on each side with that propensity for huddling together, when around lay wide empty spaces, which distinguished all the townspeople of mediæval days, and which was prompted partly by lack of easy communication and partly by a desire for companionship and security. There was, however, another reason for building houses on the bridge—a financial one. The rents went to help pay the enormous costs of erection and up-keep. Soon the bridge became a street, but its width was only 20 feet, and the roadway monopolized 12 feet of this<sup>1</sup>—only 4 feet was left on each side on which to build the houses. More room was gained by building them out over the river, wherefore they frequently fell in. The high spirits of our ancestors were no whit depressed by such occasional occurrences, any more than by the

<sup>1</sup> Gordon Home: *Old London Bridge*.

frequent fires and the horrible smell of the laystalls piled up in the unpaved and undrained streets. "Safety first" as a motto would have been meaningless to them. Quite unconsciously they put "beauty" first. In fact, a few years after the bridge was finished all the houses and the chapel of St. Thomas were burnt down. And there were other dangers. The piers were of enormous thickness, and for further protection against the strong tides of the river they were surrounded at the base by starlings, or wooden wedges designed to break the force of the waters. So they did, and the bridge withstood the waters for six hundred years; but they in turn gave rise to further and perhaps unforeseen danger; for the tide thus confined flowed and ebbed under the bridge with such enormous force as to make the shooting of the bridge a particularly dangerous sport only to be attempted by the highly skilled watermen, while the more sober citizens habitually landed on one side of the bridge and re-embarked on the other. In later centuries Pepys and Johnson both adopted this prudent course. It is characteristic of Henry VIII that he disdained this method and "shot the bridge" like a king. It must not be forgotten that for all those years the river was the main highway not only for heavy goods but for passenger traffic between the city or Southwark and Westminster or Lambeth.

The relations between the citizens and their Plantagenet kings may be described as generally friendly—always with an eye to reciprocal benefits. The kings, as was the way of mediæval monarchs, generally needed money, the citizens always wanted

privileges and security for trade. So when the lion-hearted Richard departed upon his Crusade, his coffers well lined with money extracted mainly from the citizens, and especially from the Jews, and left behind Longchamp, the Bishop of Ely, as Regent, passing over his brother John (doubtless with good reason), the citizens well knew how to take advantage of the trouble that inevitably followed.

It was an age in which Europe was seething with vigorous life, expressing itself in fighting and piety, art and commerce, and the latest movement to emerge out of the turbulence was one towards the freedom and self-government of the rising cities and the establishment of *communes*. Culturally, Europe was one, that is to say that part of the Continent in which the traditions and aspirations of the northern nations which had broken down and inherited the Roman Empire prevailed, and England was a part of that Europe. Hence London, before recognizing John, who had overthrown Longchamp, as Regent, extracted from him a condition that the city should be granted the privileges of a *commune*. Henceforth the city was governed by its own elected mayor, assisted by a court of twelve aldermen; so that when Richard returned it was to face the accomplished fact. Meanwhile, however, further pecuniary assistance from London was necessary before the king could return, for a ransom to the enormous amount of 150,000 marks was demanded by the Emperor Henry VI. The money was never paid in full, but the Londoners bore their large share of the first instalments with stoicism, and it is on record that one of the emperor's nobles who accompanied the

king to England observed that if he had known the wealth of London his master would have demanded a far greater sum.

But still more money had to be found for Richard's "punitive expedition" against the King of France, and it was on this occasion that in a fit of Plantagenet temper Richard swore he would sell London if he could find a purchaser. Whereupon the sober Londoners gave him gold for a charter, a charter which gave them jurisdiction over the River Thames; and thus began the history of the Thames Conservancy. It was in the reign of his deplorable brother that the great fire on London Bridge occurred (1212), and that the citizens of London assisted to wring from him Magna Carta, which contained one clause specially confirming the rights and charters (1215).

### CHAPTER III

#### *LONDON IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES*

THE thirteenth century is the high-water mark of the Middle Ages, the flowering time of the mediæval Renaissance, the culmination of those religious, artistic, and vital impulses which we have noted as the life-force of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The heavy and austere Norman architecture had blossomed into the luxuriance of the Gothic with its pointed arches, its crockets and finials, its flying buttresses and its exquisitely carved ornament. The religious movement associated with the reformed Benedictine orders and the Crusades had spent its enthusiasm, and the monks had settled down to an indolent and luxurious existence. But saintliness and piety were never without their witnesses, and the century saw one of the most remarkable religious revivals which has ever awakened a lethargic spiritual life. Francis of Assisi and Dominic wrung from the astute and able Pope Innocent III authority to send their devoted friars, barefoot and begging, through the length and breadth of Europe to carry the message of Christ to humble men and women, and to share their poverty and privations; not to dwell in cloistered seclusion from the world but to tramp through lanes and highways; not to live upon the ransom extorted from wealthy sinners but to beg

their way from door to door. Unregenerate man, however, in spite of the fervour of the friars, was always ready for a fight or a brawl, and was prepared to gamble on the chance of heavenly pardon which a death-bed repentance, accompanied by the recognition of the pecuniary claims of the Church, would secure. The towns were throbbing with life and industry and trade, merchants were growing rich and had taken the government of towns out of the hands of feudal barons; the crafts were organizing themselves into guilds which supervised the processes of manufacture and the control and monopoly of working and dealing in particular branches of industry. Germans and Jews were making trade international; Lombards were introducing the rudiments of banking. A colourful, picturesque and earnest life.

London played a prominent part in all these movements. Under Henry III, "the greatest builder and the greatest patron of the arts who has ever occupied the throne of England," the great Benedictine Abbey Church of Westminster as we see it now was begun. For a quarter of a century (1245-1269), the building went on, and when it was finished only the west end of the nave of the Confessor's church was left standing. The architects, according to Professor Lethaby, were Master Henry of Westminster, Master William of Gloucester, and Master Robert of Beverley. In the next century (1375) Simon Langham,<sup>1</sup> the Archbishop of Canter-

<sup>1</sup> He left all his fortune to the completion of the work, and has been called the second founder of the Abbey, and his lovely alabaster tomb stands in the Chapel of St. Benedict.

bury, undertook to carry on the great work. He completed the nave, and with a restraint and regard for the past almost unknown in that era of supreme creative art, he finished off in the style of Henry III's day. A similar spirit possessed Wren and his pupil Hawksmoor when they completed the western towers in what to them was the unsympathetic Gothic style. With the addition to the east end of the chapel of Henry VII, "one of the most marvellous creations of expiring Gothic," which was completed in 1510, we get the structure in its main members as it stands now. Not that we see much of its original exterior. The corroding influence of London smoke has necessitated constant refacing, a process which is, at the time of writing, still going on on Henry VII's chapel, so that, externally, as the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments tells us, "the Church is a copy not by any means faithful of the original, but internally it is a masterpiece of the noblest period of Gothic architecture, and a treasure house of works of art of that and later times."

Westminster Abbey has never suffered the catastrophe of fire, but of all the great city churches built during the mediæval period in London a bare dozen survived the great conflagration of 1666, all of them in the east end of the city or just outside its walls. Among them were St. John's Chapel in the Tower, St. Bartholomew's and the Temple Church. Of those belonging to the period we have now reached the finest is the Church of St. Mary Overie (later St. Saviour's), standing at the foot of London Bridge. The choir, lady chapel, and transepts were

built in 1207 by Peter de Rupibus, Bishop of Winchester, in which diocese the whole of Southwark was included until 1905, when the diocese of Southwark was created and this became the cathedral church. The beautiful nave has been rebuilt, by Sir Reginald Blomfield, in a most convincing imitation of the thirteenth-century style. The church contains the monument of John Gower, who was a friend of Chaucer, and died in 1402, and it has interesting Shakespearean associations. It was the parish church of the "Globe," the "Rose" and the "Swan" theatres on Bankside, and here are buried fellow dramatists, a fellow theatrical lessee and a brother of Shakespeare. In modern days the beautiful little Harvard Chapel was built with American money, for the founder of Harvard College, whose parents kept the Queen's Head in the Borough, was baptized in this church.

In a pleasant space just off Bishopsgate stands the Church of St. Helen's. The St. Helen commemorated is the mother of Constantine, who was believed to be the daughter of a prince of Britain. It dates from the thirteenth century, and has the curious feature of possessing two naves, one of which was for the parish and the other appropriated to the nuns of St. Helen's (one of the three nunneries<sup>1</sup> in London) a foundation by William, son of William the Goldsmith. It has been called the Westminster Abbey of the East, for it contains the tombs of many

<sup>1</sup> The others were the Benedictine nunnery of St. Mary Clerkenwell and the Poor Clares, a sister body to the Franciscan Friars established by Edmund Crouchback near the Tower. Hence the Minories, for the women of the Franciscan order were called Minoreesses.



great London citizens of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, amongst them Sir Thomas Gresham, the builder of the first Royal Exchange, Sir William Pickering (a very handsome monument) and Sir John Crosby, whose great house in Bishopsgate has been taken down to make room for one of the all-devouring banks and rebuilt at Chelsea, where it stands the completest model of a mediæval London merchant's residence we possess. Another handsome monument is that of Julius Cæsar, the exotically named Master of the Rolls in James I's reign. To enter this quiet city church brings us close to the workaday life of the Middle Ages, its piety and its art, set as it is in the heart of the twentieth-century city. It shows us the Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular styles.

Over against the Tower stands the spacious Church of Allhallows, Barking, founded by the nuns of Barking, whose first Abbess, St. Ethelburga, is commemorated in the smallest and plainest of this group of pre-Fire churches. The latter was built in the thirteenth century, and clinging to its west front in Bishopsgate are two tiny shops, built in the early seventeenth century. Allhallows contains examples of Norman, Early English and Perpendicular, but its chief glory is its fine brasses, engraved sepulchral memorials which in the thirteenth century began to take the place of stone effigies. This exquisite and enduring art on sheet brass let into the pavement, so valuable in enabling us to recover details of costume and armour, was brought to a high pitch of perfection in London both by native and foreign artists; but the surviving examples are scarce in the city;

there are probably more in Allhallows than in all the rest of the city churches put together.

The other churches of this interesting group are St. Olave's, Hart Street, where Pepys used to worship, and where he erected a charming bust to his amiable and tolerant wife; the Church of Austin Friars, standing incongruously in the midst of stockbrokers' offices, which now occupy the gardens and buildings of the great convent founded here by the Augustinian or Austin Friars in 1253; and St. Etheldreda's, which was built in 1300 as the private chapel of the Bishops of Ely, whose town house stood in Ely Place. It is now, much restored, a Roman Catholic church, an almost unique example of a pre-Reformation church restored to Catholicism, and its quiet cloister, planted with fig trees, and the lovely geometric tracery of its windows, characteristic of the Decorated style, make this little-known church one of the most fascinating in London. St. Andrew Undershaft (*i.e.* under the maypole, which used to rest on brackets along the west wall of the church), in which is a quaint monument to Stow, who holds in his hand a quill pen, renewed each year, is later, 1520. So is its neighbour, St. Katherine Cree, which takes us to the days of Laud and Inigo Jones. St. Giles' Cripplegate (fourteenth century), where Cromwell was married and Milton was buried, completes the tale of city churches which survived the Great Fire.

The coming of the friars brought a fresh wave of religious fervour. To a generation accustomed to associate wealth and luxury with their religious leaders, to look upon these conditions, perhaps, as

only due to those who monopolized learning and were in a position to open the doors of salvation to their sinful flocks, the coming of these men, whose aim was to possess nothing but the rough robe and cord which covered them, to earn their bread by the labour of their hands, or by begging when they could not work, to make no provision for the morrow and neither to receive nor handle money—this brought a new conception of the religious life. It is true that this impossible austerity could not last in all its rigour and that the urge to create some enduring work led them to house themselves in magnificent buildings, but the conception of individual poverty persisted and their teaching and example stirred a new spiritual life, besides giving an impulse to learning and founding those great mediæval schools of philosophy in the development of which England took more than her share.

This early evangelical revival swept over Europe and reached our shores early in the thirteenth century. The Dominicans, who wore black robes and specialized in preaching, arrived in 1221 and soon after established themselves in Holborn. They were known as the Black Friars. In 1276 they bought or begged that corner of the city within the walls that lay at the mouth of the Fleet and which has ever since borne their name. The great influence they wielded and their wealth may be inferred from the fact that they were allowed to pull down the portion of the city wall that enclosed that angle and rebuild it behind their property. On this fine situation they built a church, where the railway bridge now crosses Queen Victoria Street and a great hall which

stood where the Apothecaries' Hall now stands and has stood since the Great Fire. In this hall was heard the famous divorce suit of Henry VIII against the unhappy Catherine of Aragon.

Next came the Franciscans or Minorites, whose robes were grey. They were given a piece of land just inside the wall, between it and Newgate Street, where they built the Greyfriars. Christ Church, Newgate, now stands on the land once occupied by the choir of their great church. This foundation had a long career of usefulness, for Edward VI founded upon it the school of Christ's Hospital, popularly known as the Bluecoat School. It stood till within living memory and passers-by in Newgate Street could see the school in which Coleridge, Lamb and Leigh Hunt were educated and where Bowyer wielded the switch, and could watch the boys at play with the skirts of their blue robes tucked up about the waist. The school was removed in 1902 to Horsham and on its site now stands the headquarters of the Post Office and the new buildings of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, which has spread over from the neighbouring foundation of Rahere.

On the piece of land that lay between the Inner Temple and the River Fleet the Carmelites, distinguished by their white robes, came in 1241. Their foundation of the Whitefriars enjoyed, as did so many other of the monastic foundations, the privilege of sanctuary, but, whereas these privileges generally disappeared with the Reformation, it persisted here well into the seventeenth century and made this district, known as Alsatia, notorious, as we may read in Scott's *Fortunes of Nigel*. Although

the privilege of sanctuary extended only to debtors, Alsatia became the favourite resort, as Macaulay puts it, of "all who wished to be emancipated from the restraints of law," and here was to be found the choicest collection of bullies, thieves and prostitutes which London has ever got together. This unsavoury quarter is now almost wholly given over to the production of newspapers, including some of the "largest circulations in the world," whence shines no gleam of the religious and criminal associations of the neighbourhood.

The Austin (Augustinian) Friars came in 1253. While the other mendicant orders have left no other trace than their names still clinging to the neighbourhoods they made famous,<sup>1</sup> the Austin Friars have left us a noble piece of church architecture in the church already referred to, now used by the Dutch community. It is but the nave of their fine church; but as it stands it illustrates for us the friars' new conception of priestly duties. The emphasis was thrown on the preaching and the great naves they built with slender shafts were meant to hold a large congregation which could see and hear the preacher. It was one of the many ways in which the friars' movement foreshadowed the puritan movement of the seventeenth century.

Two other and less important groups remain to be noticed. The Crutched Friars (who adopted a blue robe and silver cross, whence they were known as the crossed or crutched friars), came in 1298 and

<sup>1</sup> But in Britton's Court, Whitefriars, under a newspaper office, is a cellar which was the part of the vaulted crypt of Whitefriars convent.

nothing remains to tell us of them but the name of a narrow, mediæval-looking street near Fenchurch Street. Their hall was converted at the Reformation to a glass factory, one of the earliest in England. Another portion of the site became the Admiralty Office, in which Pepys worked, and it is now covered by the huge building of the Port of London Authority.

The other was the obscure order of the Friars of the Sac, who established themselves outside Aldersgate in 1257, and moved afterwards to the Old Jewry. Nothing is left of them, but by now about one quarter of the city's area was covered by the buildings and gardens of conventual bodies.

While the religious life of the city was thus refreshed and invigorated, her financial and mercantile life were in a healthy condition. Then, as now, finance was largely in the hands of the Jews, whose capacity to flourish and grow rich under the most adverse circumstances and under repeated outbreaks of savage persecution is a testimony to trading mankind's constant need for money and money manipulators. But the end of their day was approaching. The Norman and early Plantagenet kings protected them from the worst excesses of their Christian fellow citizens, and in return looked to them to provide the money for their costly and ineffective wars. On the accession of Richard I there was a great massacre of the Jews, but the instigators were punished, and soon they were rich and flourishing again. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, however, when religious passions had been rekindled by the spirit of the crusades, they

were expelled from country after country in Europe, and in 1290 Edward I ordered their expulsion from England. The Jews had played a large part in the financial life of London where, as elsewhere, they had been compelled to live apart in the district known as the Old Jewry. Jewry Street in the east end of the city is so called because there they had their allotted burial place. Years after they left, the burial ground, according to Stow, had become "fair garden plots and summer houses for pleasure," and in this neighbourhood they settled when they were allowed to return four centuries later.

But London commerce seemed unable to maintain itself on the financial side without alien help and the disappearance of the Jews left her honest merchants without the indispensable capital or the means of raising it, and their place was filled by another southern people of subtle brains. They came from Genoa, Florence and Lucca and were known generically as Lombards. They set up in London as agents, goldsmiths and bankers and, while they took over the financial responsibilities of the Jews, they also had transferred to them that intense dislike which the Londoners of the Middle Ages exhibited, so plainly and painfully, towards those who made a living out of money by processes which the simple London citizens did not understand and could not reconcile with their ethical standards. A street in which the Lombards settled bears their name to this day. They were not the only foreigners who helped to build up the commercial supremacy of London. Where Cannon Street Station now stands, close to the mouth of the Walbrook, was the famous

Steelyard,<sup>1</sup> a wharf and group of buildings belonging to the great Hansa corporation which monopolized trade in Northern Europe. Here for centuries the "Easterlings," as they were called, a quasi-monastic body, flourished on the Baltic trade, and attained such wealth that their name, in the form of "sterling," has been adopted as a synonym for sound money. To them was assigned the maintenance of Bishopsgate, so much were they a part of London life, and so they remained until in a new age they were suppressed by Queen Elizabeth as an anachronism. But when the South-Eastern Railway Company wished to build their city terminus in Cannon Street in 1852, the land had to be purchased from the cities of Lubeck, Bremen and Hamburg, the existing representatives of the Hanseatic League.

So was London's commercial infancy nursed by aliens, while her native industrial life flourished under the "gilds." Mediæval gilds, which were voluntary associations, formed for the mutual aid and protection of their members, were of immemorial antiquity. They were originally of a religious nature, composed of persons who worshipped and feasted together and contributed to a common fund for mutual help—they were indeed a manifestation of that eternal need to form associations which is inherent in mankind and is much encouraged by the absence of a strong central authority. Some of the gilds supported schools or hospitals, some built bridges and so on, but as the thirteenth century began there was a great move-

<sup>1</sup> So called from the *Staple* or market.



ment amongst the crafts to organize themselves into guilds, and these craft guilds developed into *misteries*<sup>1</sup> which had the most important effects upon craftsmanship. They not only protected and helped their members, but made the most rigid regulations as to the quality of the work that was turned out. "In the Middle Ages," says Professor Lethaby,<sup>2</sup> "the masons' and carpenters' guilds were faculties or colleges of education in those arts, and every town was, so to say, a craft university. Corporations of masons, carpenters, and the like, were established in the town; each craft aspired to have a college hall. The universities themselves have been well named by a recent historian 'Scholars' Guilds.' The gild which recognized all the customs of its trade guaranteed the relations of the apprentice and master craftsman with whom he was placed; but he was really apprenticed to the craft as a whole, and ultimately to the city, whose freedom he engaged to take up. He was, in fact, a graduate of his craft college and wore its robes. At a later stage the apprentice became a companion or a bachelor of his art, or by producing a masterwork, the thesis of his craft, he was admitted a master. Only then was he permitted to become an employer of labour or was admitted as one of the governing body of his college. As a citizen, city dignities were open to him. He might become the master in building some abbey or cathedral, or as king's mason become a

<sup>1</sup> Not *mystery*. The word is a variant of *mastery*, and has nothing to do with the "mystery" plays which were another feature of contemporary life.

<sup>2</sup> *Technical Education in the Building Trade*, quoted by A. J. Penty, *The Restoration of the Gild System*.

member of the royal household, the acknowledged great master of his time in mason-craft. With such a system was it so very wonderful that the buildings of the Middle Ages, which were indeed wonderful, should have been produced?"

It was Walter Hervey, mayor in 1271, a democratically minded person, considered by Loftie to be the best of London's mayors, who did most for the formation of the craft gilds in London. The trades were to a large extent localized and the names of many city streets still remind us of the trades carried on there. Thus the bakers worked in Bread Street, and the blacksmiths in Ironmonger Lane, while Cordwainer Ward still reminds us of the staple industry of that quarter, shoemaking. The quaint names of some London parishes indicate the trade followed in the parish: such are St. James' Garlickhithe, St. Margaret Pattens, St. Mildred Poultry, St. Martin Pomery, St. Michael-le-Querne ("St. Michael where corn is sold": a querne is a handmill for crushing corn). Clustered around Cheapside, then pre-eminently the shopping and marketing street of London, are several other streets whose names remind us of the shops and booths where various commodities were specially dealt in; such are Wood Street, Milk Street, Honey Lane and Hosier Lane. The most important trades, those of the mercers and grocers, settled, the first near the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, and the other in Soper Lane (now Queen Street). The butchers congregated round Newgate, not far from their present quarters, and had a market until Dickens' day in Paternoster Square. The founders were around Aldgate, while

the goldsmiths, who were practically identical with the bankers, were in Lombard Street and the western end of Cheapside. Thus was the commercial organization of London stabilized for several hundreds of years.

The centre of London's life was in Cheapside, a straight, broad thoroughfare well suited for the display of those shows and pageants in which the Londoner delighted and occasionally "glittering with the gorgeous pastimes of Knighthood." It was in the year of the expulsion of the Jews that Edward I lost his beloved wife, Eleanor of Castile, she who had "drawn forth the poison with her balmy breath"; and the occasion of her funeral provided a gorgeous processional display and left London enriched with the cross in Cheapside, some fragments of which showing the arms of England and Castile are preserved in Guildhall Museum. Another was set up in the little village of Charing, some half-mile from the Abbey of Westminster, in which her remains were deposited. It was carved by a mason bearing the expressive name of Alexander the Imaginator. A well-executed copy of the cross at Charing has been erected in the courtyard of Charing Cross Station, though the cross itself stood where Le Sueur's statue of Charles I now stands. The tomb in Edward the Confessor's Chapel is surmounted by a wrought-iron grate made by one Thomas of Leighton, which is one of the finest pieces of mediæval smith's work in England.

In 1348 Europe, England and London were visited by a plague, the most devastating of those awful scourges of an age devoid of sanitation and

medical science. It was called the "Black Death," and was variously attributed to the wrath of God and the wickedness of the Jews, but is now recognized as a virulent form of bubonic plague originating in China. It is impossible to estimate the number of deaths but there is good reason for supposing that in London between one-third and one-half of the population perished and the whole economic structure of London and the kingdom was dislocated. For many years afterwards Parliament ineffectually tried, out of abysmal ignorance of economic laws, to readjust the industrial life of the country by passing acts regulating the price at which a man could sell his labour and forbidding the migration of labourers. The Corporation of London, which itself was struggling hard to keep wages down to their former level, was severely admonished for failing to enforce this order.

One of the results of this terrible visitation was the foundation in 1371, as an expiation, of the last great monastic establishment in London. It belonged to the third of the reformed Benedictine orders, the Carthusians. Their piety expressed itself in the solitary cell and absolute prohibition of communication between the brethren. The Charterhouse (a corruption of Chartreuse) was built just outside the wall on a piece of ground which had been used as a burial place for the victims of the plague and the pious founders were Sir Walter Manny, great soldier and perfect knight, and Northburgh, Bishop of London. It was built in the usual Carthusian manner with a great number of little cells round a great cloister, each cell with a

garden on two sides, where the silent brothers meditated, worked and prayed for the souls of Manny and Northburgh. At the Reformation and after many vicissitudes the priory, converted into a mansion by Lord North, was acquired by Thomas Sutton, who founded here the Hospital of King James, which comprised a brotherhood for eighty poor men and a school for forty poor boys. From the latter developed the great school of Charterhouse which claims among its scholars such men as Steele, Addison, John Wesley, Blackstone, Grote, Leech, Havelock and Thackeray. It has now been removed to the country but its school buildings were taken over by another school, that of the Merchant Taylors Company, now itself about to emigrate. This school also boasts some renowned "old boys" such as Edmund Spenser, James Shirley and Lord Clive. But the sixteenth-century mansion still survives with its outbuildings and chapel, and houses the other part of the foundation of Thomas Sutton. Here, in the heart of London, in an authentic "haunt of ancient peace," close to the roar of Smithfield, a number of reduced gentlefolk spend their last years in comfort.

Remotely connected with the economic upheaval which followed on the Black Death was the rebellion of Wat Tyler. The causes of this rising—the economic conditions and the new democratic spirit traceable in part to the teaching of the friars—and its consequences do not greatly concern us; but it brought into prominence a mayor of London, Sir William Walworth, who slew the leader with his dagger. This gave an opportunity to the tempera-

mental King Richard II to offer himself as the leader of the people, a gesture which had all the desired effect but was not followed up by appropriate action. Incidentally, the rebellion led to the complete destruction of the earliest of those palaces which subsequently lined the river banks from the Temple to Westminster. This was the Savoy Palace, the owner of which had been Peter of Savoy, to whom it was given by that lavish distributor of favours to the undeserving, his nephew Henry III. Only a few years before its destruction by the rebels it had witnessed the reception of King John on the unique occasion when a king of France had been led captive through the streets of London (1356). There he was to reside until the payment of his ransom—which never was paid. It now belonged to John of Gaunt, who was intensely disliked by the people of London. The citizens took advantage of the presence of the rebels to wreak their vengeance on him by sacking and utterly destroying his palace. It lay in ruins for over a century when Henry VII built on the site a hospital and the existing Savoy Chapel (1505). The Chapel has since been twice rebuilt, and now stands on the slope of the hill dreaming of Old London, hemmed in by towering hotels and office buildings. The buildings of the hospital were finally demolished to make an approach to Waterloo Bridge.

Vigorous and energetic mayors held sway in London in those days. A colleague and predecessor of Walworth, Sir John Philpot, from whom a city lane takes its name, had, in 1376, during the evil days of Edward III's senility, fitted out at his own

expense and under his own command a fleet which destroyed a Scottish pirate named Mercer, who had long preyed on English commerce in the Channel. A few years later came Richard Whittington, but before leaving the fourteenth century we must notice the earliest appearance of London in literary history.

William Langland, the author of those melancholy verses known as the *Vision of Piers Plowman*, which give us a harrowing description of the miserable lot of the poor, was walking the streets of London in the years after the Black Death and our triumphant and disastrous wars with France. He seems to have been the first of that long line of poets who have been drawn by the magnet of London's opportunities to face starvation in its streets—a precursor of De Quincey and Francis Thompson. But he enjoyed some measure of domestic happiness, for he tells us he lived with Kit (his wife) in a "cote" on Cornhill.

The gloom and morbidity of his poems are in striking contrast to the gaiety of his brilliant and far greater contemporary, Geoffrey Chaucer, who died in the same year (1400). Chaucer was a Comptroller of Customs and Subsidy of Wools, Skins, etc., in the Port of London. He lived in the rooms over Aldgate, his lease, dated 1374, including the cellars under the gate; and here, conveniently for the Port of London, he lived till 1386. He was appointed Clerk of the Works at Westminster in 1389, and lived in a house on the site of Henry VII's chapel, where he died. He was married in 1367 in the Savoy Chapel that was burnt so soon after, and was buried

in Westminster Abbey, the first in time of those whose remains lie in Poets' Corner. He saw service in the wars and went on several important diplomatic missions to France, so that he mixed in the best company. His *Canterbury Tales* were intended to delight the gay and fashionable society which gathered round the numerous Edwardian princes. He made his pilgrims gather at the Tabard Inn in the Borough under the care of the jovial host, Henry Bailey. The inn stood in what is now Talbot Yard, and the pilgrims set off down Tabard Street, which runs along the line of the old Roman road. The Borough High Street was famous for its inns. Pilgrims, merchants, embassies, mendicant friars, jongleurs, soldiers, crowded its narrow roadway, for it was the only way from the south into London and the traffic congestion was probably worse than in our own time. Many of the inns survive in a shadowy way, mostly as carriers' and railway goods depots; one, the "George," retains the galleries over the courtyard. Although it only dates from 1676 it must very closely resemble the inn as Chaucer knew it. The Tabard was new in Chaucer's time, but as late as 1728 the *Beggar's Opera* was played in the inn yard.

The eager and tumultuous London life of the time becomes vivid to us in the literature that now springs into life—soon to die down until that richer outburst of the Elizabethan age. Gower, whose tomb we have noted in St. Saviour's, wrote many a dull and solemn line, but he initiates us into the tricks of the tradesmen of the fourteenth century, and John Lydgate, another contemporary, has left us



a delightful and amusing fragment in his *London Lyckpenny*. The poet has come to Westminster to seek justice, but finds that without money he can do nothing, so he goes to London and relates his troubles in Cheapside, Cornhill, Candlewick Street and Eastcheap, but in all these busy marts "for lack of money I could not spede."

London, according to Froissart, was the chief factor in the downfall of Richard, and though that enigmatic king had been no mean patron of poets and the arts the change of monarch was welcomed by Langland, Chaucer and Gower. The new dynasty coincided with the flourishing time of mediæval London's wealth and power. The greatest figure is Sir Richard Whittington, whose rather vague outline is substantiated by legend. What the cat had to do with his fortunes is quite unknown, but that there was some affinity between him and a cat is certain, for besides the inescapable testimony of the legend there is evidence in the quite recent discovery of the sculptured figure of a boy nursing a cat found in the ruins of a house belonging to Whittington's family in Gloucester. He may or may not have rested on Highgate Hill, but he certainly was three, nay four, times Mayor of London. He advanced large sums of money to the first two Lancastrian kings. Newgate, a pestilential prison, he rebuilt. He also rebuilt the Church of St. Michael Paternoster Royal, where he was buried, made it a College (College Hill, Cannon Street, takes its name from this), and founded an almshouse which still flourishes, under the beneficent direction of the Mercers' Company, at Highgate. He built a great library for the

Greyfriars, and stocked it with books, left money for rebuilding St. Bartholomew's Hospital and made many other benefactions. He was the archetype of the princely London merchants of the fifteenth century. The story of his inviting Henry V to dinner and burning the king's bonds before his eyes, thereby sacrificing a sum of £60,000, whether true or not, is at least *ben trovato*, and illustrates the generous spirit of Whittington, the wealth of the London moneyed men and the popularity of Henry V. This is also attested by the display made by the citizens on the occasion of the funeral of that conquering hero, when his body was brought from France and carried over London Bridge through the streets of London, thronged with genuine mourners, to be laid to rest in the great Abbey at Westminster. There it was laid in a chantry chapel under a tomb which was the most elaborate of all the magnificent tombs in that building, and over which still brood his shield and helmet and saddle.

The reign of his successor was one of the most troubled and disastrous in the history of England, but through it all the prosperity of London seemed unshakable. A great shock the citizens had when the redoubtable Jack Cade, who said his father was a Mortimer, headed a revolt of the common people of Kent and, making his objective the wealthy city, assembled his followers on Blackheath, the conveniently situated open space to the south-east of London, lying across the main road from the coast to London Bridge. Here, according to Shakespeare, he addressed them thus: "There shall be in England

seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny; the three hooped pot shall have ten hoops; and I will make it felony to drink small beer: all the realm shall be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass." What their grievance was is not clear. Misgovernment and unpopular ministers were the immediate and stated causes of the outbreak, but economic causes were no doubt the ultimate reason, as in Wat Tyler's day, for the turbulence of the sober English peasant. Having routed a force sent against them, and killed its commander, the rebels took up their quarters at Southwark and threatened the bridge. It was evident that they had many sympathisers in the city, and some of them let them across the bridge. Cade, finding himself at London Stone, to which some mysterious sanction seems to have been attached, struck it with his sword, crying out in triumph, "Now is Mortimer lord of the City." His exultation was, however, premature. For a time he was successful and kept his men well in hand, but Lord Say, the Treasurer, equally unpopular in the city and with the insurgents, was seized when about to be tried by the mayor, and beheaded. This incited a blood lust amongst Cade's men, and the red terror which followed united the citizens and the trained bands, a kind of militia or voluntary force of London citizens and apprentices. They fought a pitched battle with the rebels on the bridge, which lasted all night and ended in a draw, for the rebels set fire to the drawbridge and tower at the southern end of the bridge and got away. But the next morning the offer of a free pardon dispersed the tired and gorged rebels to their houses, and a

price set upon the head of Cade ensured his death. His head and those of twenty of his adherents adorned the southern gate of London Bridge—a grisly custom which had prevailed ever since the bridge was built. The heads of all traitors reposed on poles on this gateway until they rotted and fell off, and this ghastly *memento mori* was the first impression the traveller had as, his thoughts bent on business, pleasure or religious exercises, he lifted up his eyes and beheld the entrance to the great city.

The city quickly recovered and was soon occupied with the factions of the Wars of the Roses. London generally took the side of the Yorkists, that is, the winning side until the final catastrophe of Bosworth Field. It was in the garden of the Inner Temple that the eponymous roses were plucked; not in the lovely garden we now see, but higher up, for the river wall ran where Paper Buildings now stands, and the old garden stood above that. The Londoners welcomed Edward IV in 1461 and again when he "came back" in 1471. But, while he was away to encounter Margaret at Tewkesbury, their city had to suffer another attack. Thomas Fauconberg, known by Shakespeare as the Bastard of Falconbridge, a scion of the aristocratic house of Nevill, whose head, the Kingmaker, had just been slain at Barnet, sailed up the Thames and tried to land in the city; but he met so strong a resistance that he landed outside and marched round the walls, trying each gate in turn. But because of the perils of the times the citizens had lately repaired wall and gates, and again he was repulsed. Then he made a desperate attack on Aldgate; some of his followers got

in, but were cut off by the lowering of the portcullis. Then up went the portcullis and out rushed the trained bands, driving the attackers away in headlong flight. Fauconberg's head also went to garnish the gate of London Bridge.

In these dark days the Tower added to its sinister reputation. There the poor old ex-King Henry VI was slain, it is said, by Richard of Gloucester, and there the two young princes, sons of Edward IV, were killed, certainly by the authority of the able, unscrupulous, cultured and often generous Richard. London had already made him king. Lodging in the beautiful house in Bishopsgate, but recently erected by the great London merchant and Alderman Sir John Crosby, he wove the web of intrigue that led to his proclamation as king at the Guildhall.

"The Middle Ages," says a recent writer, "had every virtue except moderation and every vice except vulgarity," and from these scenes of bloodshed and violence it is a relief to take a glance at the cultural achievements of what Pater called the "solemn fifteenth century" and Bishop Stubbs "a worn-out helpless age." The Renaissance, that magical movement which recovered the arts and literature of Greece and Rome and worked them into the texture of the life of western Europe, was long in coming to London and England, where the "last enchantments of the Middle Ages" were being woven in the Perpendicular Gothic, a style peculiarly English and an indication of the breaking down of that homogeneous culture into that of the emerging nationalities with its consequent differentiations. The opening of the century saw the erection

by Richard II of the mighty roof of Westminster Hall. It is the finest example we have of that most efficient and decorative construction known as the hammerbeam, which Lethaby calls the "supreme work of carpentry in the world."

All through the century the wealthy London citizens spent great sums in the erection of chantries, monuments, and screens and on the beautiful stained glass that was then produced. The Guildhall on a new site was begun in 1411 and finished in 1425. Whittington must often have gazed with a citizen's pride on the stately building as it slowly rose from the ground, but he did not live to see it completed. The porch and the crypt of that building still remain and the bases of the walls. It is still, the Royal Commission tells us, "substantially an early fifteenth-century building and the Porch and East Crypt are noteworthy examples of the period. The Aldermen's Court Room has one of the richest plastered ceilings in London."

In the quiet village of Eltham, Edward IV built himself a palace, of which the great hall with its hammerbeam roof (next to Westminster perhaps the finest we have), the moat, crossed by the bridge he had built, and some of the outbuildings still stand unexpectedly in a secluded corner of the ancient village, unknown to the great majority of the inhabitants of the city of which Eltham, rather surprisingly, is now part. Another hidden-away building of this period is Barnard's Inn Hall, south of Holborn, once an Inn of Court, now the Mercers' School—a school which educated such men as Sir Thomas Gresham and Dean Colet. It has a quaint

cupola very characteristic of the period. Many noble churches were built with spacious naves and clerestories, most of which have perished, but among the survivors, besides those already mentioned, are St. Margaret's, Westminster, the parish church of the House of Commons and, at the other end of the town, St. Dunstan's, Stepney, where lie buried many of the captains who built up the mercantile marine of England and whom we love to refer to as "sea-dogs."

One of the most venerable-looking buildings in London is Lambeth Palace, which has been the residence of the Archbishops of Canterbury for six hundred years. Those two massive towers which flank the entrance gateway at the foot of Lambeth Bridge were built by Cardinal Morton in 1490 (the earliest existing brick building in London), and the Lollards' Tower in 1434. The chapel, which is a beautiful example of the chaste Early English work, was built in the early thirteenth century.

But the crowning glory of this period, really a piece of Gothic architecture projected into the Renaissance, is the chapel built by Henry VII on the site of the Lady Chapel of the Abbey and completed by his son in overpowering splendour. The fan vaulting, of incredible richness and delicacy, is the finest existing example of that construction, while the magnificent tomb of Henry VII and his wife and that of his mother were wrought by the imported Italian artist Torrigiano in the Renaissance style, with some Gothic elements in keeping with the building. Another tomb by this gifted artist, who, it will be remembered, had the honour of breaking

Michelangelo's nose, can be seen in the Museum of the Public Record Office.

Men's minds were being prepared for the efflorescence of learning which was to come in the next century. John Carpenter, the town clerk of Whittington's day, and one of his executors, was a type. He was one of the first learned clerks not in orders, he was keen on education and the founder of the City School, the precursor of the City of London School of to-day, so that his name is not inappropriately attached to the modern street in which that school stands. When he died, his friend Robert Large, mayor and mercer, had a young apprentice called William Caxton, who was subsequently sent to Bruges as agent for the powerful Mercers' Company, then in control of the Company of Merchant Adventurers, in the Low Countries (about 1450). Here he made good and was employed in negotiating treaties concerning the wool trade. At that time the mainstay of London commerce was the export of English-grown wool to Flanders, where it was woven into cloth which had an international market. But Caxton's activities brought him into touch with the cultured court of Burgundy, and this successful business man began to take an interest in the new art of printing. He became partner in a printing press at Bruges, and in 1476 he came back to London after thirty-three years abroad and set up the first printing press in the Almonry, under the patronage of the Abbot of Westminster. There, at the sign of the Red Pole, was issued (1471) the first book printed in English, *The Dictes or sayings of the philosophres*.



The Almonry, the birthplace of English printing, stood west of the Abbey between Victoria Street and Tothill Street, where subsequently was built the Westminster Palace Hotel. Caxton died in 1491, and his grave is in St. Margaret's. One of his assistants, Wynkyn de Worde, established a press at the foot of Shoe Lane, in Fleet Street, "over against the Conduit," and thus was inaugurated the connection of that famous street with the trade of letters.

The introduction of printing may well be taken as the death knell of the Middle Ages, but as far as London was concerned they went out in a blaze of splendour. These were the great days of the city livery companies, which practically monopolized political and municipal power in the City of London, for in 1375 the right of electing the corporate officers and members of parliament was transferred to them from the wards, a right which, as far as the municipal officers are concerned, they still retain. Basing their position on Charters granted by Edward III,<sup>1</sup> they had important duties as well as rights. The mercers inspected wool, the tailors tested the yard measures, goldsmiths assayed gold and silver (as they still do), the vintners tasted the wines, and the brewers guaranteed the beer. Whittington was conspicuous for his prosecutions of brewers who brewed bad beer. If the administration of their laws had been equal to the good intentions of the companies this would indeed have been the golden age for pure food and sound

<sup>1</sup> It seems natural to regard the companies as a development of the trade guilds, but some authorities think they had an entirely independent origin.

materials. The companies were housed in beautiful halls, many of them the discarded palaces of the great city families of an earlier age. They accumulated great riches, and for centuries, while the art of taxation was in a rudimentary stage, their funds were subject to constant requisitions. "The government when money was wanted for public works informed the Lord Mayor, who apportioned the sums required among the various societies and issued precepts for its payment. Contributions towards setting the poor to work, erecting the Royal Exchange, clearing the city ditch, discovering new countries, furnishing military and naval armaments, for men, arms and ammunition for the defence of the city were amongst the requisitions."<sup>1</sup> Of late years, while their original purposes have practically disappeared their still considerable funds are largely devoted to educational purposes, especially in connection with the trades to which they owe their existence. They form one of the few remaining links connecting us with the Middle Ages which faded away as the Tudors came in.

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*: Article "Livery Companies."

## CHAPTER IV

### TUDOR LONDON

AT the opening of the sixteenth century, London was still a mediæval city practically confined within the boundaries of the Roman Wall. The lay-out of the narrow crowded streets was very much the same as it is now; but for the gashes made by Queen Victoria Street, King William Street, and Moorgate Street the plan of the city is curiously unaltered. The churches mostly stand where they did, the ward boundaries are unchanged; the gates are removed but their names still mark the main entrances into the city; the two principal open spaces, East and West Smithfield, are still the largest open spaces in the city.

To the west was rising a new city under the shadow of the already venerable Abbey. There were the law courts and the royal palace. Between the two cities the "sweet Thames ran softly," and provided the ordinary and most convenient means of communication. Parallel with the river ran a miry lane, and between the lane and the river lay the ruins of the Savoy. Clustering round the gates within and without the wall were the buildings, gardens, and estates of great conventual houses; otherwise suburbs were practically non-existent, though we hear even in the fourteenth century of

city merchants who lived in country houses in the villages of Stepney, Hackney and Stratford.

But by the end of the century changes had come which marked the beginning of modern London. The great monastic houses had been laid low, and on their sites, after they had been well quarried, had arisen festering slums. The lane to Westminster was paved and lined with houses on the north side and, on the south, by palaces in grounds running down to the river and the water gates through which boats glided to the private staithes of their noble owners. Three of these stand now high and dry to mark where the river lapped the garden walls at high tide and to remind us how much valuable land was reclaimed by the construction of the Victoria Embankment. There is the Water Gate of Essex House at the foot of Essex Street, the last remnant of the house built on the Outer Temple. The second is York Gate, a charming piece of rusticated Italian architecture built by Inigo Jones and carved by Nicholas Stone, for York House, now sunk below the northern corner of the Embankment Gardens. The other is the Water Gate of Pembroke House, behind Whitehall, built by Sir William Chambers in the reign of George II.

Houses had been built along Holborn beyond Chancery Lane. Moorfields had been drained and laid out in walks, the village of Clerkenwell had become an extensive and fashionable suburb, and along the straight wide road of Bishopsgate Without were houses thickly built, amongst which was to rise at the end of the century the ornate house of Sir Paul Pindar, used for some time after his death

as the Venetian embassy. Beyond were the villages of Hoxton and Islington. The Whitechapel Road was beginning to be filled up as far as the village of Mile End. On the other side of London Bridge, still the only bridge across the river until one came to Kingston, was the ancient suburb of Southwark, now become a ward of the city and its Bohemian quarter, with its inns and theatres and pleasure gardens. For the cultural change which most clearly indicates the awakening of the modern spirit is the beginning of the theatre and the drama.

The theatre was unknown in London until the first quarter of the century, and, at its close, there were more than a dozen buildings devoted to the drama. They were not within the walls of the city itself, for this was not allowed on account of the danger of infection where large crowds were gathered, but so near that a short walk would put their delights within the reach of the citizens; in Shoreditch and in Southwark. They were built and run by actors and syndicates of actors. They catered for a demand shared by all classes and produced a drama the splendour of which has not since been equalled.

We see, too, the beginnings of modern business development in the foundation of the Royal Exchange by Sir Thomas Gresham, and in the establishment of the great trading companies; while we may detect the beginnings of a National Debt in the borrowings of Henry VII, although such respectable methods of raising the wind were soon replaced by the more doubtful expedient of the benevolence, to

which of course the London citizens were some of the chief contributors.

This prudent and extortionate king amassed large sums of money which were in due time squandered by his splendour-loving son and successor. The marriage of Henry VIII with his brother's luckless widow Catherine was the occasion of a display in which the citizens vied with the popular young king in lavishness. Cheapside, the home of the goldsmiths, was hung with gold brocade. To Henry's extravagance we owe it that the shackles of mediævalism were broken by the dissolution of the monasteries, begun in 1531. The increase in the numbers, wealth and luxury of the monks and friars predisposed men's minds to acquiesce in the vast spoliation which swept away the fair buildings and pleasant gardens which cumbered and beautified the city and its surroundings. With that lack of administrative foresight of which we have already had so much evidence, the change was effected in the most wasteful manner possible. With some of the vast wealth the king replenished his treasury, with some he gorged his favourites. No provision was made for carrying on the beneficent work of caring for the sick and needy which the monasteries had performed, and so arose the great economic problem of the century which was solved by the Poor Law of the end of the century.

The citizens of London saved something from the wreckage. It is not unlikely that they had witnessed the downfall of the great monastic establishments, which sterilized so much of the wealth of the city—that wealth of which they were

beginning to appreciate the use as industrial capital; but they would not be particularly pleased to watch its transfer to men whose use of it would be still more selfish and uneconomic. Thus towards the end of the king's reign they obtained possession of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and of the extensive buildings of the Grey Friars, and squeezed out of the king's coffers a small contribution towards the maintenance of the poor. But the accession of his son Edward VI gave them an opportunity of extending and consolidating these gains. A committee of citizens organized the hospital of St. Bartholomew's, and the school of Christ's Hospital on the Grey Friars foundation. The Hospital of St. Thomas in Southwark was purchased. This hospital was adjacent to the subsequent foundation of Guy's and in 1871 was removed to the Albert Embankment, its site being required by the South-Eastern Railway. Another institution, Bedlam Hospital for the insane, was acquired. It stood where Liverpool Street Station now stands and was afterwards moved to Moorfields, where during the eighteenth century it provided the citizens of that callous period with one of their most amusing shows. It was again removed in 1815 to the suburban district of St. George's Fields (Lambeth Road) where the present building, with a fine dome by Sydney Smirke, was erected on the site of the notorious Dog and Duck Tavern, a favourite resort of some of the less reputable citizens. The tale of its removals is not complete, for it is about to be taken still further out. Edward VI also handed over his palace of Bridewell, which was between Whitefriars

and the Fleet, to become a workhouse and a house of correction for vagabonds and for unruly apprentices. Nothing is left of this but its name, which became a generic term for such houses of correction, its entrance in New Bridge Street with handsome gates of hammered iron, and a court room where are administered the estates, now chiefly devoted to the maintenance of an orphan boys' school at Witley.

Thus were some of the spoils of the London monasteries turned to beneficent uses. They were, however, but a small proportion of the total plunder, most of which was annexed by the high-handed nobles of the day. The lengths to which they could go is illustrated in the gentle Stow's account of the manner in which Thomas Cromwell, who had acquired some of the property of the Austin Friars, bordering on Throgmorton Street, added to his possessions. "My father," he says, "had a garden there, and a house standing close to his (Cromwell's) south pale; this house they loosed from the ground, and bare upon rollers into my father's garden twenty-two feet, ere my father heard thereof; no warning was given him nor other answer when he spake to the surveyors of that work, but that their master Sir Thomas commanded them so to do; no man durst go to argue the matter, but each man lost his land, and my father paid his whole rent, which was 6s. 6d. the year, for that half which was left." A little patch of garden, which refreshes the eyes of stockbrokers and their clerks who hurry through Drapers' Gardens, is what is left of the tyrannous chancellor's demesne for, upon his



sudden and unregretted departure (1541) it was bought by the Drapers' Company, whose hall, dating from 1667, stands in Throgmorton Street.

Another proud lord, the Protector Somerset, conveyed the stones of St. John's Priory, Clerkenwell (leaving Docwra's gateway) together with those from the north cloister of St. Paul's, and from the ancient church of St. Mary le Strand, an Inn of Chancery and two bishops' town houses, to build himself that large and goodly house called Somerset House. His tenure of his ill-gotten mansion was shorter even than Cromwell's, for he died before it was finished (1552), and the place became a residence for Princess Elizabeth and Queen Henrietta Maria and Queen Catherine of Braganza. Inigo Jones died in it and Oliver Cromwell lay in state there. Upon that site now stands the magnificent pile whose stately front was even more imposing when its base was lapped by the waters of the Thames. It was built by Sir William Chambers in 1786. In it was housed the Royal Academy till 1837 (when it migrated to the National Gallery) and the Royal Society till 1850. Its east wing is occupied by King's College, founded in 1828, predominantly as a theological college, when the idea of a London University began to take shape. It was to be a corrective to the "infidel" University College. The main building is occupied by the Inland Revenue and the wills of Shakespeare and Milton are to be seen there.

But the fury of destruction which possessed Henry was only one of the many that disturbed that strenuous monarch's active mind. He was an

enthusiastic builder and a great encourager of artists, some of whom, such as Torrigiano and Holbein, have left their mark on our city. From him we date the characteristic Tudor architecture with its fine brickwork, imposing gateways flanked by turrets, its long low ranges of buildings, linen-fold panelling and general appearance of "redness." He built St. James's Palace, of which we have left the Gateway, the Presence Chamber and the Chapel with a lovely ceiling painted by Holbein. His great chancellor, Wolsey, in ambitious emulation, built a palace at Hampton Court and another at Whitehall. Men rose to greatness and tumbled therefrom with a record rapidity in these days and both these buildings fell to Henry almost before they were completed. Of the chancellor's palace at Whitehall, York Place as it was called, there are some relics at the back of the Treasury buildings, where two Tudor windows look out upon an ancient court, and a cellar in Whitehall Gardens. What was thought of the relations of these two men and the two palaces appears in Skelton, the London satirical poet, the tutor of Henry VIII and the "too candid friend of Wolsey."

Why come ye not to court?  
To which court?  
To the King's Court  
Or to Hampton Court?  
Nay, to the King's Court  
But Hampton Court  
Hath the pre-eminence,  
And Yorkes Place. . . .

Another relic of early Tudor times is the fine gateway of Lincoln's Inn built in 1518. Opposite the gateway is the hall, which, however, dates from 1492 and has recently been very successfully restored. Some of the chambers in Old Square and Old Buildings date from 1524 and 1534, and on the other side of the hall one gets a good impression of an old Tudor courtyard. The Washhouse and other courts at the Charterhouse, with their characteristic long, low ranges of buildings, also belong to this time. Linenfold panelling in abundance can be seen in the unlikely suburb of Hackney at St. John's Institute, a fairly complete example of the country house of a London merchant, Sir John Cass, of the early sixteenth century. Not far off, rising in the midst of the Victorian suburb of Canonbury, with its pleasant leafy roads, rises the tower of Canonbury House, built by Prior Bolton (who made the oriel window in St. Bartholomew's) about 1532. Little of his original building is left, but there are some admirable Elizabethan ceilings.

It was Henry and his court who started Chelsea upon its career as a fashionable suburb. In this riverside fishing village, with its thirteenth-century church, he built himself a royal manor house, which stood just to the east of Oakley Street, and of which fragments of garden walls remain. Some of his courtiers came here too, the most illustrious of whom was Sir Thomas More, whose execution in 1535 removed the most blameless of the fickle King's advisors. "We would rather have lost the best city of our dominions than have lost such a worthy counsellor," said the Emperor Charles V. No trace

of More's house exists, but it and the united family that inhabited it are lovingly described by the cosmopolitan scholar Erasmus, who was a great friend of More's and visited him in Chelsea. From here More went down the river to Tower Hill to die. He worshipped in the old church in which he built a chapel, and his beautiful monument, erected immediately after his death, stands in the chancel. Two piers of the arch of the chapel have lovely carved heads which are probably the work of Hans Holbein, another of More's distinguished visitors. "Nothing could be more significant of the state of art at this time than the appearance in this little riverside church of these products of a stranger artist, wrought by the invitation of the great chancellor, who delighted to give his friendship and patronage to the 'new learning.'"<sup>1</sup>

When the youthful Edward died the gentle and learned Lady Jane Grey was so ill-advised as to allow herself to be proclaimed queen, and the sad spectacle was seen at the Guildhall of this girl of seventeen being tried for her life, with her husband, his two brothers and the aged Cranmer. Sentence of death was passed. It could scarcely have been executed but for the foolish attempt of Sir Thomas Wyatt, who led the last armed attack upon the city. Following precedent, he tried to get in by London Bridge, thinking to be admitted by friends, but he found the gates closed and the drawbridge cut, so went up to Kingston, rebuilt the destroyed bridge and marched up to Turnham Green. His halt here was fatal to his enterprise, for when he got to

<sup>1</sup> Godfrey: *History of Architecture in London*

Charing Cross he was checked by Sir John Gage in the only battle known to have been fought at that now teeming centre. However, Gage was repulsed and Wyatt made his way to Ludgate Hill, where his audacious enterprise was brought to an end by a certain tailor of Watling Street called Harris. This gentleman, seeing the soldiers mounting the hill remarked, "These be Wyatt's ancients"; whereupon the astonished citizens closed the gates. Wyatt stood "musing awhile upon a stall over against the Bell Savadge Gate." The result of his musing was that he turned back, but he was intercepted and made prisoner at Temple Bar. His head did not embellish the gate of London Bridge, but was exhibited on a gibbet at Hay Hill, which stands in the midst of Mayfair. But the result of this pitiable rebellion was the death of the Lady Jane on Tower Hill. Another result was the Marian persecution. Smithfield was the scene of this holocaust of Protestant divines. The exact spot has been discovered opposite the gate of St. Bartholomew's Hospital where, three feet below the surface, was found a mass of stone blackened by fire and still covered by ashes and charred human bones.

London, it must be admitted, was not inspired by any lofty idealism in the matter of religion. The plain citizens, although no doubt they had a sentimental attachment to old forms and doctrines, seem to have been prepared to adopt any brand of religion which the masterful Tudors imposed upon them. Generally speaking, they acquiesced in the royal supremacy of Henry, the determined Protestantism of Edward, and the no less resolute

Catholicism of Mary. But they had no regrets for the passing of the gloomy Mary and her morose consort, Philip II. Their reign closed in a series of disasters, following on the burnings of Smithfield, including an inundation of the Thames, a plague and a famine, and concluding with the loss of the last English possession on the Continent, the port of Calais, a loss which went to the hearts of the London citizens, many of whom had flourishing businesses in that port. Never had the fortunes of England sunk lower than when Mary was succeeded by her Protestant sister Elizabeth, who was welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm. With the Londoners she was already highly popular, for she was the great-granddaughter of a Lord Mayor, whose body lay buried in St. Laurence Jewry.

In the great era that was then inaugurated London began to develop into the world market she has since become. Her progress was helped by the destruction of Antwerp by Parma's Spaniards, not the first nor the last of those senseless acts of Continental despots that sent crowds of honest and industrious citizens to enrich the commercial life of this country. About a third of the merchants and manufacturers of Antwerp, the leading industrial and commercial city of western Europe, settled in London. London now wrested the Oriental trade from Venice and the Baltic trade from the Hanseatic League, whose Steelyard the queen closed in 1597. Chartered companies, the first of which was the Merchant Adventurers, founded in Henry VII's reign, gave an undreamt-of expansion to the activities of the London merchants. There were the

Russia Company (chartered 1554), the Turkey Company, the Eastland Company and others. The most famous of all, the East India Company, was chartered in 1601. The only one of these chartered companies which still functions as a trading corporation, the Hudson Bay Company, was not founded until 1670. It has its offices now in Bishopsgate.

These developments were assisted by the foundation of the Royal Exchange by Sir Thomas Gresham, Lord Mayor and Grand Master of the Freemasons. This great merchant had a large house and grounds in Bishopsgate which, on the death of his widow, became Gresham College. Here the Royal Society was founded in 1643, and here Christopher Wren taught astronomy, and on its site now stands a large block of offices known as Gresham House. His business house, where he carried on the trade of a goldsmith, merging into that of banker, was in Lombard Street, where Martin's Bank now stands and carries on his business, using his "grasshopper" as a sign. The Royal Exchange, which he called the "Burse," became the financial centre of London. It was burnt in the Great Fire, his statue and the grasshopper which crowned the spire were the only parts that escaped destruction. The present building dates from 1844, but is no longer used for the "general meeting of merchants." The only regular markets which are now held there take place on Wednesday afternoons, when men engaged in the chemical trades gather together in one corner and others dealing in tallow and fats in another. The interior walls of the great court are now adorned

with a number of frescoes illustrating the history of London, Liberty, Commerce and Education. Stocks and shares have had a market of their own since 1801 on the other side of Threadneedle Street.

Much of the wealth created was used by the merchants in the erection of lordly mansions and other more modest dwellings in which true domesticity at last succeeded entirely in displacing the crude equipment and military character of feudal days. One of these mansions is Holland House in Kensington, a typical Elizabethan country house standing in its park. It was built in 1607 by John Thorpe and it is the only building in London in which we have perfectly displayed that very English compromising type of domestic architecture. It is a harmonious mixture of Gothic and classic styles—gables, oriel windows, Tudor chimney stalks and lovely Renaissance details. It has played, too, a conspicuous part in the political and social history of London. Here Addison, who had married the widow of the Earl of Warwick and Holland lived, and here he showed the young earl, his stepson, "how a Christian can die" (1719). Often, it is said, when the countess became difficult, he took refuge in the "Holland Arms" at the corner of Holland Lane. But the great days of Holland House came in the first forty years of the last century, when it was presided over by the uncle of Charles Fox and his masterful but somewhat disagreeable wife, Lady Holland, and became the gathering place of Whig politicians, poets and wits and distinguished visitors from abroad—Macaulay and Sydney Smith, Rogers the poet-banker, Scott, Byron and Moore, Talley-



rand the cynical, Thurlow ("No one was ever so wise as Thurlow looked," said Fox), Edmund Kean, "a wonderful talker," Sir Francis Burdett who, Disraeli said, was "the greatest gentleman he had known." The Earl of Egremont, the magnificent patron of Turner, and of sport and agriculture, Brougham, "domineering and interfering," "Citizen" Stanhope, John Allen the librarian and literary oracle of Holland House were among the guests who carried the art of conversation and disputation to the highest point.

The most charming Elizabethan relic we have left in London is the famous Middle Temple Hall, dating from 1575. It has a beautiful hammerbeam roof; a dais, the boards of which are those on which *Twelfth Night* was first acted, in 1601, before Queen Elizabeth; an oriel reaching nearly to the ground; a gallery, the richly carved front of which is the work of Huguenot refugees; and an oak screen, another fine example of sumptuous carving. This hall is almost unique for beauty and perfect preservation. Gray's Inn (1560) and Staple Inn (1581) also possess halls of this period, both with hammerbeam roofs and screens; and a good example of the hall of a private house is at the Charterhouse, where much of the mansion built by the Duke of Norfolk and Thomas Sutton, as we have seen, still remains.

For an example of the ordinary street architecture of the time we have, miraculously preserved, the shops which mask the front of Staple Inn in Holborn. The "half timber" work of these gabled houses is an ever fresh delight to the passer-by in a bus. The elaborately enriched timber front of two over-

hanging storeys from Sir Paul Pindar's house in Bishopsgate, built about 1610, may be seen in South Kensington Museum. The Inner Temple Gatehouse (17 Fleet Street, generally referred to as Prince Henry's room) belongs to 1611. Its use as a barber's shop for many years gave its beautifully moulded ceiling with the badge of Prince Henry a pleasant purpose, for London citizens gazed approvingly upon it in the process of being shaved.

The most extraordinary and enduring achievements of Elizabethan and Jacobean London were in poetry and the drama. Since the days of Chaucer,

“ . . . the first warbler whose sweet breath  
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill  
The spacious days of great Elizabeth,”

no poet of consequence had arisen, but a new glory now broke on England with Edmund Spenser. He was born in East London, not far from the River Lea, the “gentle stream” of which he sang in *Prothalamion*. English poetry sprang to life again with the publication of the *Faerie Queene* in London in 1590. But the drama had already risen fully equipped, and at once took its place as the favourite amusement of the citizens. At the Inns of Court and in the courtyards of inns plays of a sort had been performed since the Reformation, but there was no theatre in London till 1576, when the actor, James Burbage, built the “Theatre” in Shoreditch. In that neighbourhood were the “Curtain” (in Curtain Road, where the Church of St. James now stands), and the “Fortune,” built by Edward Alleyn (who founded Dulwich College out of the proceeds of his

theatrical ventures), between Whitecross Street and Golden Lane. In Southwark was the "Globe," built by Burbage in 1599 of the materials used in the "Theatre" which he had pulled down. It was an octagonal structure of wood, and stood in Bankside, which had long been the entertainment centre of London with its bear gardens and its Paris gardens and its bull-baiting grounds, not to mention the "stews." Near the "Globe" were the "Rose" and the "Swan," both belonging to Henslowe. Bankside still follows its old crooked course, it has a faintly antique atmosphere and its tributary and contiguous streets and alleys bear names which carry us back to the haunts of dubious pleasure and dissipation which flourished here for several centuries; but the large premises of Messrs. Barclay and Perkins have swallowed up the sites of the three theatres.

Other theatres were the "Blackfriars," built by the "Earl of Leicester's servants," in whose company Shakespeare perhaps first came to London, the "Hope" (in Paris Garden), and the "Newington" in Newington Butts. With most of these Shakespeare had connection either as playwright, actor, manager or shareholder, and his position in the theatrical world is attested by several of his London contemporaries—the sceptic Greene, with bitterness, alluding to him under the name of Shakescene as "an upstart crow beautified with our feathers"; Milton, with affection, as "sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child," and Francis Mere, with admiration, as "the most excellent in both kinds for the stage." The ascertained facts of his life are meagre in the

extreme, but some of his contacts in London are clear and well attested.

It is doubtful when Shakespeare came to London, but in 1592 he began to be known as a playwright and was a member of the chamberlain's company of actors. In 1594 that company was playing at Newington Butts and at the "Rose." They also probably used the "Theatre" in Shoreditch, and when that was pulled down migrated to the "Globe." About 1596 Shakespeare lived at Bear Gardens, and at the "Falcon" on Bankside (where the Falcon Wharf is now) he met daily his fellow actors in the Bankside theatres, and Ben Jonson. There, too, came Edward Alleyn; Henslowe, Beaumont and Fletcher also lived here. In 1598 there is a William Shakespeare registered as a ratepayer in St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, who probably was our Shakespeare and in that year *Romeo and Juliet* and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, in which Shakespeare acted, were produced at the "Curtain Theatre." From 1598 to 1604, Shakespeare lodged in a house at the corner of Silver Street and Monkwell Street (now the Coopers' Arms, itself of considerable antiquity) with a certain Christopher Mountjoy, a tire-maker, a Huguenot refugee. As he daily proceeded from this lodging to the scenes of his labours on Bankside he would go down Bread Street on his way to the ferry, passing the door of one John Milton, a scrivener, who was known amongst his fellow citizens as one who had been disinherited for reading the Bible, but was destined to a more impressive fame as the father of another John Milton, born here in 1608. He would pass, too, the Mermaid tavern, which lay between

Bread Street and Friday Street, where the wits and poets met and drank and talked and took their ease. Many legends have gathered round this inn, of which Beaumont wrote to Ben Jonson:

“ In this warm shine  
I lie, and dream of your full Mermaid wine.

. . . What things have we seen  
Done at the Mermaid! Heard words that have  
been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
As if that every one from whence they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest. . . .”

It is certain that Sir Walter Raleigh, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Donne were amongst the brilliant company that gathered here. Shakespeare is not recorded to have called at the inn, but it is almost impossible that he should have avoided doing so. And if he would go by London Bridge into Southwark he would pass (and perhaps sometimes not pass) the “Boar’s Head” of Mistress Quickly and Sir John Falstaff, which stood in what was then Eastcheap, on the spot where stands now the clumsy statue of William IV.

In 1612 Shakespeare bought a house in Ireland Yard which he left in his will to his daughter Susanna. This was near the Blackfriars Theatre, then under the management of Shakespeare and Burbage. Very soon after he left London. In the churchyard of St. Mary, which straddles across the crooked lane

of Aldermanbury, is a statue to Henry Condell and John Heminge, both of that parish, fellow actors with Shakespeare, whose title to fame rests upon their piety in gathering together his plays in the First Folio of 1623.

Ben Jonson, born at Westminster, writer, dramatist, poet, and critic, who said that "Shakespeare wanted arte," succeeded to Shakespeare's sovereignty of the stage and kept it almost to the date of its suppression by the Puritans. In the last years of his life, he was appointed chronologer of the city, with a "chandlerly pension for verjuice and mustard of £33, 6s. 8d.," and died, in 1637, in a house close to the Abbey, where he is buried under the simple epitaph, "*O rare Ben Jonson.*"

Christopher Marlowe, whose achievements, had he lived, might have rivalled Shakespeare's, was killed on Deptford Green in a brawl following a dispute about a tavern bill (1593).

## CHAPTER V

### STUART LONDON

**B**EN JONSON had collaborated with Inigo Jones in the production of those elaborate masques which entertained the court of James I. Inigo has been called the father of the English Renaissance; he was our first architect in the modern sense and he destroyed (or it would be more correct to say, nearly destroyed) the Gothic tradition which had lingered so much longer in this country than on the Continent. He brought the Italian style into England and has left us charming works of severely classical type treated with a reticence which we like to think of as peculiarly English. His life and work mark a definite cleavage in London architecture and, from now onwards, classical styles prevail until the Gothic revival, more than two hundred years later. Inigo enriched London with some fine buildings, nearly all of which lie beyond the bounds of the city which had hitherto been the chief field for architectural exploits.

London was spreading in spite of the proclamations issued by Elizabeth and James and, even later, by Oliver Cromwell, to forbid building, in a hopeless attempt to stem the development of the town—which was considered to be so unhealthy. The effect of these enactments was to convert villages like Islington and Greenwich into suburbs; while, in

disregard of the regulations, a "west end" was developing. Lincoln's Inn Fields was laid out (1618) by a Royal Commission, of which Francis Bacon was a member and Inigo Jones the architect. The latter it was who gave the Fields the exact dimensions of the Great Pyramid, and planned the noblemen's houses on the west side, of which Lindsay House (Nos. 59 and 60 Lincoln's Inn Fields) still looks with serene classical dignity over the beautiful square; and the Fields became for a time the most aristocratic quarter of London. Not far off the Earl of Bedford was laying out the ground north of his garden in the Strand as Covent Garden. It had been the convent garden of Westminster Abbey and the fashionable architect planned also this fashionable square with a church, St. Paul's (1631) on the west side. This was the first church in London built since the Reformation, and thus was the earliest place of worship built for Protestant use. The earl said he wanted nothing better than a barn. "Well then," said Inigo, "he shall have the finest barn in Europe." On the north and east sides, colonnades were erected where gallants and their mistresses might promenade under shelter. The church has been destroyed, but the present building is an exact copy of Inigo's and the monstrous columns of the Piazza on the north side now shelter market porters from the southern sun.

Inigo's great opportunity came when James I decided to rebuild Whitehall Palace on a magnificent scale between the river and St. James's Park, and he instructed Inigo, now Surveyor-General, to prepare the plans. How great a palace might have been



erected here is suggested by the only portion ever carried out, the Banqueting Hall, from one of the windows of which Charles I stepped on to his scaffold. The beauty of this building is arresting in the dignity of its façade, modelled after the most distinguished Italian architecture of the Renaissance. It was completed in 1622, and was the first building in London to be constructed of Portland stone, which Wren afterwards found so beautifully adapted to the London atmosphere and utilized so freely and with such happy results. The combined results of the sun, the smoke, the prevailing south-west winds, and the texture of the stone is a harmony in black and white which gives St. Paul's Cathedral, the British Museum, Somerset House, and other great buildings their definite London character. "Once your building is up the stone begins to gather a crust of dirt which greys down its first delicate lemon tinge; after it has accumulated a certain quantity the crust comes off by its own weight, and the air then plays on the clean stone, which has thus already had a certain weathering, and the surface gradually whitens to the ashen colour which is the beauty of London."<sup>1</sup>

In two buildings Inigo essayed the Gothic manner—in the chapel of Lincoln's Inn, built on a crypt or undercroft which is open on all sides, and St. Alban's, Wood Street, a church which was only partially destroyed in the Fire and repaired by Christopher Wren. It is the only building which bears the mark of those two geniuses.

Besides those already mentioned, the only relics

<sup>1</sup> James Bone: *The London Perambulator*.

of Inigo Jones in London are the Queen's House at Greenwich (1635) now the Royal Naval School, and Ashburnham House (1640), now part of Westminster School, a perfect specimen of the domestic architecture of the English Renaissance, with a notable staircase. This school, partially housed in what remains of the monastic buildings of the Abbey, trained many of the finest minds of the seventeenth century—Ben Jonson, George Herbert, Wren, Grinling Gibbons, Dryden, and Prior. Cowper and Warren Hastings were also taught here.

Thus London had definitely left behind the Gothic forms, which were the result of an evolution extending over a thousand years, and revived the classic manner. In other ways the reigns of the first Stuarts mark the stirrings of the modern world. Francis Bacon was promulgating his theory of philosophy, which laid the foundation of modern science. But though Bacon was a London man—he was born at York House in the Strand (1561) and died at Lord Arundel's House in Highgate (1626), having caught a chill through descending from his coach on a winter's day to stuff a fowl with snow in order to determine the properties of snow as an antiseptic—and although he laid out the gardens of Gray's Inn in which still flourishes one of the trees he planted, his story belongs to England rather than to London.

We come close to the daily life of London with the construction of the New River, an enterprise which had for its object the supplying of London with pure water from the springs of Hertfordshire.

The wells and streams had hitherto been the only source of supply and they had been made available to the householder by means of conduits at street corners. Such supplies had long been inadequate and the wells and streams were polluted, which was the chief cause of the plagues that scourged London so frequently. In 1580, a certain Pieter Moritz had obtained a licence to draw water from the Thames, and he constructed a large engine at the city end of London Bridge. The engine was actuated by the tides and supplied all the eastern part of the city. It could hardly have supplied drinking water even to the robust and more or less immune constitutions of our seventeenth-century ancestors, but such as it was it continued in operation till 1822. In 1608 the city corporation "had under consideration" a scheme for supplying water on a large and organized scale from the distant hills. Sir Hugh Myddleton, a wealthy citizen, took over this great scheme from the corporation and finished it in 1613. He constructed a canal, with aqueducts to cross the numerous little river valleys on the way, from the chalk springs near Ware to Islington. He exhausted his own financial resources in the adventure and obtained monetary assistance from King James in return for "King's shares" in the company. The New River remains one of the chief sources of water supply in London, but the company was absorbed by the Metropolitan Water Board in 1902 at which time its £100 shares were worth £120,000. The reservoirs stand on the top of the hill above Clerkenwell and near by are the new offices of the Metropolitan Water Board, in Rosebery Avenue, which enclose the court room

of the original company's offices, built about the end of the century, complete with the rich carving and panelled ceiling that were such a feature of that period.

This bold attempt to organize a supply of pure water is a landmark in the history of London.

The first attempt to deal with another of London's modern problems—that of transport—was made about the same time. Hitherto traffic between London and Westminster had been monopolized by the watermen of the River Thames, but now appeared the hackney coach. Vested interests in the shape of the Watermen's Company intervened. They made a strong protest against this new-fangled means of locomotion in 1623, describing the coaches as "this infernal swarm of trade spillers which have so overrun the land that we can get no living upon the water." Nevertheless, they had come to stay; their convenience was unquestioned, and at the end of the century we find Parliament imposing a licence fee of £50 per coach, and an annual tax of £4, and limiting their numbers to 700. This tax was the earliest road fund, for the money raised was used for paving the streets.

In no way is the contrast between Tudor and Stuart methods of government and conceptions of their prerogative more noticeable than in the attitude of the monarchs towards the city. There is a story told that, in high displeasure at the refusal of London's citizens to furnish a loan to James I (an attitude which no Stuart king seemed capable of understanding), that king threatened to remove his court to another place. The Lord Mayor respect-

fully answered, "Your Majesty hath power to do what you please, and your City of London will obey accordingly; but she humbly desires that when your Majesty shall remove your courts, you would please to leave the Thames behind you?"<sup>1</sup> The irony was probably not lost on that by no means unintelligent monarch, but his son managed fatally to antagonize the citizens. The attempt to raise ship money upset them badly. Its payment was refused and writs were issued by the king. It was currently reported that Stafford meant to "plunder" the city, and his unjustifiable execution sent the citizens mad with joy. But when the king came down to Guildhall to demand the persons of the five contumacious Members of Parliament, which was refused, civil war became inevitable. The citizens, with their puritanical and mercantile instincts, were wholeheartedly on the side of Parliament. There was a fever of recruitment amongst the apprentices, and the trained bands of London gave a good account of themselves in the early stages of the war. When after Edge Hill the king marched upon London and reached Brentford, they put up a bold front, and he retired. It was the nearest he ever got to London. The city guaranteed £10,000 a week for the expenses of the Parliamentary army and the city was fortified with earthworks. From the River Lea the earthworks ran by Hackney, Shoreditch, and Holborn to the west, where "Oliver's Mount," an important strong point, gave a name to Mount Street, Mayfair. Enclosing Westminster they met the Thames, and the southern banks of London's arterial riverway

<sup>1</sup> Howell: *Londinopolis*.

were protected by a chain of earthworks from Vauxhall across St. George's Fields to the river again at Bermondsey.

London was, as so often before, the key to victory, and the citizens had the dubious satisfaction of seeing their king pass to his death from his own Palace of Whitehall. The room from which he walked to the scaffold was that which housed his wonderful collection of 460 pictures—for Charles was the most munificent and discriminating royal patron of the arts we have had since Henry III—with a ceiling gloriously painted by Rubens, which has only quite recently been restored to view. They saw, too, disappear his statue, the first, and still the finest, equestrian statue in England, cast by the sculptor Le Sueur. It was sold to a brazier in Holborn to be broken up, and the brazier made a fine thing of selling souvenirs, alleged to be manufactured from the broken-up statue, to fervent royalists; but at the Restoration the statue reappeared complete and was set up at Charing Cross, whence the "fair and fatal king" still looks down Whitehall. The statue stands on a pedestal carved by Grinling Gibbons, and is altogether the most satisfactory in a collection of statues in which London has little cause for pride.

But the Londoners were not very happy under the iron rule of Cromwell's soldiery and sour-visaged Parliament; and when Cromwell died and was buried in the Abbey, whence his remains were soon after to be ignominiously ejected, "It was the joyfulest funeral I ever saw," said Evelyn, "for there was none that cried but dogs, which the soldiers hooted away with a barbarous noise,

drinking and taking tobacco in the streets as they went." So the citizens listened approvingly when General Monk made overtures to the mayor and aldermen respecting the bringing back of King Charles II. Soon letters came from Charles himself, and the Lord Mayor, Thomas Alleyne, called together the citizens, read them the letters and appointed a deputation of citizens to wait on Charles at Breda and invite him to take the crown. The upshot of these negotiations was that Charles, after his ten years of wandering, returned to seat himself upon the ancestral throne, and was received with the wildest enthusiasm by the people of London. Then was inaugurated that reign of licence and gaiety which has left so conspicuous a mark upon our history and our literature.

But the Puritanism of the City of London was not shaken. One of the most notable changes wrought by the Restoration was the definite and complete severance of the life of the court and of the city. In the palace of Whitehall and in the new fashionable suburbs about Covent Garden, Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields, Charles and his court, his harem and their hangers-on, made up for the long years of exile with play-acting, gambling, amours and every kind of dissipation. This mode of life was completely alien to the ideas which held rule east of Temple Bar, where austerity of outlook in religion and ethics was deep-seated and enduring. This conception of life and duty, often tinged with hypocrisy and narrowness of spirit, moulded the character of London's citizens for some two hundred years, and was the chief factor in making

London the greatest centre of wealth and commerce the world has ever seen.

John Milton, who embodied the Puritan ideal, without its dissociation from the joy of life, was living in a house in Petty France, Westminster, at the time of the Restoration. There his blindness came upon him and there he began *Paradise Lost*. His accomplished secretary, Andrew Marvell, lived with him. In that house a hundred years later lived Jeremy Bentham and Hazlitt. After them came Sir Marc Isambard Brunel, the famous engineer, and John Stuart Mill. Probably no private house has ever seen so rich a succession of occupiers, and it was pulled down without protest in 1877 to make way for what is assuredly the ugliest block of buildings in London, Queen Anne's Mansions.

The prosperity which now seemed fairly launched was to experience a horrid setback in two catastrophic blows: the Great Plague and the Great Fire. On 6th June 1665 Pepys notes in his diary, "The hottest day I ever felt in my life. This day, much against my will, I did in Drury Lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and 'Lord have mercy upon us!' writ there; which was a sad sight to me, being the first of the kind that, to my remembrance, I ever saw. It put me into an ill conception of myself and my smell, so that I was forced to buy some roll-tobacco to smell and chew, which took away the apprehension." The plague, not by any means the first which had struck London both before and since the Black Death of 1349, had begun the year before in a house in Long Acre; but now, in the fearful heat of that summer, it spread



with devastating rapidity, and soon the dreadful sign and pathetic inscription, which Pepys had noted, were to be seen on hundreds of homes, and the stillness of the night was broken only by carts patrolling the streets, accompanied by the mournful cry of "Bring out your dead." All attempts at decent burial were abandoned. The dead were shovelled into pits in Bunhill Fields and in Tothill Fields, in Houndsditch, in Deadmans Place in Southwark, in Earl Street, Westminster, and in Hand Alley, Bishopsgate. The crude medical science of that day was hopelessly inadequate to stay the scourge; the doctors seemed to make the patients worse. Business was stopped and grass grew before the Royal Exchange. Two hundred thousand people (out of a population of between six and seven hundred thousand), including the king and his court, fled from the doomed city. The Lord Mayor, however, stuck to it, and so did General Monk. Pepys stood his ground and carried on his business at the Navy Office, and took his simple pleasures. "By water to Foxhall," he writes in the height of the plague, "and there walked an hour alone, observing the several humours of the citizens that were there this holiday, pulling of cherries, and God knows what." So resilient is the human spirit. On the 4th September Pepys wrote to Lady Carteret, "I have stayed in the City till above 7400 died in one week and of them about 6000 of the plague, and little noise heard day or night but the tolling of the bells." With the coming of winter the violence of the plague abated, but the city was not completely cleansed until the second disaster, the Fire of 1666,

burnt its purifying way through the rotten houses. Its recurrence was effectually prevented by the improved water supply we have already noted, for the tainted wells were choked by the debris of the fire and the use of New River water became universal. One hundred thousand was the appalling total of the deaths. Of these, Mr. Walter Bell points out, in *The Great Plague of London*, no fewer than forty thousand occurred in the outparishes which had now sprung up on the fringe of the city which covered an area larger than that of the city itself and contained a denser population. They were generally of the poorest classes. They dwelt in rotten houses, "in seemingly impenetrable rookeries of filthy courts and blind alleys."

The fire which broke out the following year was also encouraged by abnormally hot weather, and by a strong and persistent wind from the east. On the 2nd of September the fire started at a baker's shop in Pudding Lane; Pepys, living not far off in Seething Lane, well to windward of the outbreak, was awakened by his maid at three in the morning to look at the fire, but, being accustomed to such sights, went back to bed again. When he rises in the morning he hears that three hundred houses have been consumed. The great heat, the wooden houses dried to tinder, the narrow streets, the strong wind that drove the flames towards the heart of the city and the absence of any means of getting at water with which to fight the flames, made the disaster inevitable. For five days the fire raged. It leapt the Fleet River and tore across London Bridge. Homeless people fled to the swamps of Moorfields, to

Islington and to the hills of Hampstead. The river was crowded with wherries bearing goods to Southwark and safety. Pepys here gives an interesting detail. He saw the "river full of lighters and boats taking on goods," and he "observed that 'hardly one lighter or boat in three that had the goods of a house in, but there was a pair of Virginalls in it.'" Pepys, who had an unbounded curiosity and miraculous powers of observation, has left us an extraordinarily vivid account of this overwhelming disaster. When he could "endure no more upon the water" the family "went to a little alehouse on Bankside and saw the fire grow . . . in corners and upon steeples, and between churches and houses, as far as we could see up the hill of the city, in a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame." The Lord Mayor was energetic but helpless, and could do little but wring his hands. The Duke of York, who was Pepys' chief and in those days showed a power of organization and management which seemed to desert him when fate called him to the throne, exerted himself personally, and with troops of soldiers, to save property and lives and finally resorted to the expedient of blowing up houses across the path of the fire. Houses were destroyed in Tower Street, at Temple Bar and at Pye Corner in Smithfield. Checked partly by this, partly by the dropping of the wind and partly because in many directions there were no more buildings to burn, the fire came to an end on the 7th September, save for some outbreaks from smouldering heaps of ruins which continued for days afterwards.

The citizens were faced with an appalling prob-

lem. Three hundred and ninety-five acres of dwellings had been destroyed, with eighty-nine churches, and the great newly restored Church of St. Paul's. But the great catastrophe was the last affliction for London. Since that day she has known neither war, plague, famine nor disaster until, two hundred and fifty years later, a new enemy by a new route afflicted her with a new weapon.

The impoverished citizens met the situation manfully. A new town sprang up in Moorfields while the city was building. "Into Moorfields," says Pepys, "and did find houses built two stories high and like to stand; and must become a place of great trade until the city be built; and the street is already paved as London streets used to be." So eager were the citizens to rebuild their houses and resume their business that they could not wait for the development of the magnificent plan that Wren produced within a few days of the fire.

Wren was not a London man, but none has left so imposing a mark upon the city as he. The greatest architect we have ever had, in his day second only to Newton as a mathematician, an engineer, President of the Royal Society, Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, never has the hour so indubitably produced the man. Above all, he had vision and, at a time when "town planning" had not been thought of, he drew up a plan for the rebuilding of the city which would have made it the most stately in the world. By this plan the city, a roughly shaped oval within the old walls, was to have two foci; St. Paul's in the west and the Royal Exchange in the north-east. The cathedral was to be surrounded by

a piazza and the Exchange, standing in a broad open place, by public offices such as the Post House, Mint, Excise Office and Insurance Office. The Guildhall was half-way between. One broad thoroughfare ran diagonally through the foci connecting Aldgate with the Royal Exchange, St. Paul's and Ludgate, and another straight through from Ludgate to the Tower. The streets were to be arranged at right angles or parallel to the latter, except around the Exchange, where some formed concentric circles. Other wide places were made at the junctions of streets, the churches were put in commanding positions, broad streets and long vistas would delight the eye of the citizen. An embankment lined the north bank of the river the whole length of the city, with provision for docks and wharves. The Fleet was to be widened and embanked and provided with wharves, while beyond that river was a suburb consisting of a central place and radiating and concentric streets. There was still, however, provision for only one bridge and the undestroyed part of the city and the new suburb of Moorfields were apparently to remain as they were.

Vested interests, lack of vision and financial stringency, however, controlled men's minds and forbade any attempt to realize this noble conception, and, before long, the city was rebuilt entirely on its old street lines but now very definitely in brick. The lovers of its old crooked streets and quaint names may rejoice that they are now able to look upon the city as it was constructed in the Middle Ages, but from a broader point of view the failure to seize the unequalled opportunity is to be deplored. Had

the design ever been carried out, although it applied only to one-hundredth part of the area now covered by London, it is hard to believe that the subsequent development would have been allowed to occur in the haphazard way in which it has proceeded up to our own day.

Wren's matchless talent found ample employment in rebuilding the churches, which he accomplished as the architect of the City Church Commissioners at a salary of £100 a year. Of the eighty-nine which were destroyed, he rebuilt fifty-two, and of these thirty-five remain. The skill with which they were grouped in relation to the great cathedral which was now rising under his direction, the way in which, seen from afar, they appear to harmonize and to set each other off, have produced one of the architectural marvels of the world—perhaps even now not properly appreciated. Indeed, the erection of huge blocks of offices where before were low buildings is rapidly making it impossible fully to appreciate the scheme, for from no place can the general design be realized so clearly as was possible a few years ago from Blackfriars or London Bridge. The best view of this great fleet of churches is to be obtained from the tower of Southwark Cathedral and from there the observer cannot fail to be struck with the marvellous variety of beauty presented by the graceful spires and sedate towers with which Wren has spiritualized the austere and simple lines of the bodies of the churches.

It must be remembered that the idea of a church building and its functions had altered considerably since pre-Reformation days. The central feature of

the service was now the sermon, not the sacramental and ceremonial mysticism which had rendered the services in pre-Reformation days so gorgeous, and had made demands on space for processional and other ceremonial purposes. Nor was there any demand for chapels and chantries to add variety and opportunities for artistic display to the plain quadrilateral hall in which chancel and sanctuary were reduced to insignificant proportions. Wren set out to design a building, the principal object of which was to accommodate the largest number of hearers within sight of the pulpit, and to repress all exuberance of decoration, carving and colours which might distract the attention of the congregation from the discourse of the minister. The power of invention which he has displayed in varying this type while confining himself to severely classical lines is as striking as in the towers and steeples. In one or two cases (notably in St. Mary Aldermary) he has worked in the Gothic tradition, but here he is not so successful; for it was impossible in the humanistic seventeenth century to recapture the inspiration of the mystical faith that had made the authentic Gothic church a thing unique and inimitable.

Some of the most noteworthy of these churches are St. Stephen's, Walbrook, a miniature of St. Paul's with a central dome supported on sixteen Corinthian pillars arranged in groups of four, technically a supreme effort; St. Mary le Bow, Cheapside, standing on its Norman crypt with its great spire topped by the Flying Dragon weather vane; St. Laurence Jewry, with its elaborate

carvings by Grinling Gibbons; St. Bride's, Fleet Street, with its lovely spire built up of little temples diminishing in size till it pricks the sky; St. Peter's, Cornhill, which has a handsome and unique carved oak screen; St. Martin's, Ludgate, whose lead-covered spire rises purposefully to direct the attention to the masterpiece of St. Paul's behind it; St. Mary at Hill, with a beautiful little dome; St. Vedast, Foster Lane, with its fine and plain steeple, again directing attention, together with the steeple of Christ Church, Newgate, which is the same height, to the mass of St. Paul's; St. Dunstan's in the East with its Gothic tower and steeple of which Wren was so proud;<sup>1</sup> St. Magnus, London Bridge, with one of his finest steeples under which and through the tower ran the main path to London Bridge; St. Benet, Paul's Wharf, in brick and—"brooding over them all, vast and serene"—St. Paul's, than which no finer example of the later Renaissance is to be found in Europe. It is the only cathedral in England of a classical type—for none other was built between mediæval times and the age of the Gothic revival, and it is the only one, except (with some qualification) Salisbury, which was built "all of a piece."

It would be interesting to follow the story of the various designs made by Wren for St. Paul's (the actual building bearing very little resemblance to either), but here it must suffice to call attention to its main features. One notes particularly the horizontal division of the exterior by two orders of columns,

<sup>1</sup> When somebody told Wren that a hurricane had injured all his steeples—"Not St. Dunstan's," said he.



one over the other, which has the effect of emphasizing yet relieving the great height of the outer walls. The upper storey is, however, a false one. There is nothing behind the wall; it conceals a concession to the Gothic feeling, so difficult to eradicate, which required the nave to be higher than the aisles to show a clerestory. The dome is a triumph of constructive ingenuity demonstrating Wren's qualifications as an engineer. It is also a masterpiece of graceful line and harmonious proportion; though it is a curious fact, pointed out by Loftie, that, until he built his own, Wren could never have seen a dome of any size. It is really two domes, an inner and an outer, with an inner core of brickwork to sustain the stone lantern. The two western towers, like two temples, are amongst Wren's happiest efforts in this favourite design. Of the few fragments saved from the old church one is the monument, a white marble effigy in a shroud, of Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, that strange master of fantastic language and queer conceits. It is by Nicholas Stone, master mason, sculptor, and fellow worker with Inigo Jones.

The cathedral was building between 1675 and 1697, and Wren lived for another quarter of a century. He died in 1723, after the mean spirits of his time had succeeded in depriving him of the surveyorship which he had held for fifty years. But his body rests in his great cathedral under the fitting and adequate epitaph, "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.*"

Wren's churches give a distinction to the city which it could not otherwise possess and the "mighty fleet of Wren with their topgallants and

mainsails of stone"<sup>1</sup> grouped harmoniously round the mighty fabric of St. Paul's on its hill-top in the centre of the city presents a prospect which no city can rival.

Of the makers of London, Wren is the greatest. To the century following the Great Fire we owe the greater part of that mass of red brick building known as Queen Anne or Georgian, whose mellow colouring and beautifully proportioned elevations are the most characteristic of London's contributions to the art of architecture and harmonize so graciously with the Portland stone in quietly absorbing her damp and smoky atmosphere and turning to loveliness the effects thereof. Many of these are Wren's creations. He enriched London with Greenwich and Chelsea Hospitals. The first had been a royal palace, successor to Eltham, in which Mary and Elizabeth were born.<sup>2</sup> William III rebuilt it as a hospital for disabled sailors as Charles II had established Chelsea as a refuge for veteran soldiers. Greenwich shows another of Wren's superb domes. His pupil, Hawksmoor, built the other, but the whole design was much modified and altered by Wren's successor, the heavy-handed genius, Vanbrugh. Seen from the river with the park behind, it offers a superb view which, in these days when the river has lost its function as a highway, is rarely enjoyed by Londoners. Chelsea Hospital is not so heavy and is one of Wren's most delightful creations. Not far from Greenwich is the Morden College at Blackheath,

<sup>1</sup> James Bone: *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> The Royal kennels were on the opposite bank: hence the Isle of Dogs.

one over the other, which has the effect of emphasizing yet relieving the great height of the outer walls. The upper storey is, however, a false one. There is nothing behind the wall; it conceals a concession to the Gothic feeling, so difficult to eradicate, which required the nave to be higher than the aisles to show a clerestory. The dome is a triumph of constructive ingenuity demonstrating Wren's qualifications as an engineer. It is also a masterpiece of graceful line and harmonious proportion; though it is a curious fact, pointed out by Loftie, that, until he built his own, Wren could never have seen a dome of any size. It is really two domes, an inner and an outer, with an inner core of brickwork to sustain the stone lantern. The two western towers, like two temples, are amongst Wren's happiest efforts in this favourite design. Of the few fragments saved from the old church one is the monument, a white marble effigy in a shroud, of Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, that strange master of fantastic language and queer conceits. It is by Nicholas Stone, master mason, sculptor, and fellow worker with Inigo Jones.

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which Wren built to accommodate the "decayed merchants," beneficiaries of Sir John Morden. These three are perhaps the most beautiful examples of Wren's genius for domestic architecture, but his industry was amazing and his pupils and assistants must have been touched with the fire of his genius. For he has left us also the Monument, that "tall bully" that commemorates the outbreak of the Fire; Temple Bar, which, though removed from its original location at the western gate of the city's liberties, has been re-erected and startles the pedestrian as he comes across it in a very quiet corner of Hertfordshire standing as the gate to Theobald's Park; the charming little pavilion called the Orangery at Kensington Palace; Marlborough House, a royal residence on the Mall effectually screened from the view by very high walls; and the residence of the Dean of St. Paul's by Doctors' Commons, looking appropriately gloomy at the back of a bleak courtyard paved with granite blocks. Newcastle House, one of the aristocratic houses on the west side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, was completed by Christopher Wren in 1694, half a century after Lindsay House, a few doors farther on, was built by Inigo Jones, and the contrast of styles is very interesting and instructive.

The extraordinary commercial activity of the city in the nineteenth century has deprived us of almost all ancient buildings of a domestic character, but there is one survivor of the great burghers' mansions in a retired court hidden away behind Mark Lane (No. 33). Now used as offices, it has a beautifully carved doorway, a wide staircase and a panelled hall.

The only other relics of the seventeenth-century citizens' houses are at 21 College Hill and 1 and 2 Laurence Pountney Lane, whose enriched doorways with shell hoods contrast with the plainness of the exterior; and one nobleman's mansion, that of the Earl of Derby, still looks out upon Queen Victoria Street, the newest of all city streets. It was rebuilt after the Fire, and is now the College of Arms. In the quiet little precinct known as Amen Court are three canons' houses of the same period, with torch extinguishers amongst the ironwork at their entrances.

But in the West End there is naturally a much larger number of houses surviving from this most interesting period (*c.* 1670-1714). Best and most well-preserved is the beautiful street of houses called Queen Anne's Gate in Westminster, built about 1704, of which the doorways of Nos. 26, 30, 17, and 19 are peculiarly rich in carvings; and just round the corner is the Bluecoat School in Caxton Street (1709), with a quaint little figure of a bluecoat boy over the doorway in the costume of the period.

Many of the buildings of the Temple stand as they were rebuilt after the Great Fire. There is the narrow Middle Temple Lane where, straight from the modernity of Fleet Street, one comes upon a row of houses with overhanging upper storeys built in 1693. The lane is entered through a gateway built by Wren. King's Bench Walk is of the same date and Nos. 3 and 4 have beautiful doorways. Oldest of all are the Lamb Building and the House of the Master of the Temple completed the year after the Fire, the latter with a pediment and quoins, the

former quite plain; both with charming doorways. Opposite Lamb Building are the cloisters built by Wren, the ground floor of which is an open arcade of plain arches while along the centre runs a row of columns supporting the upper floor. Tradition says they do not support it, for Wren built them in deference to the timidity of the benchers who thought the arches were too wide apart for safety—so he built these posts to satisfy them, but did not let them reach the beam above. Pump Court, Elm Court, Brick Court, Essex Court, and New Court were all built between 1670 and 1680, and the Fountain which adds such grace and freshness to Fountain Court was placed there in 1681.

Fleet Street has numerous fragments of these old days. Opposite the Law Courts stand four ancient buildings, one the office of the *London Mercury*, which may even date from the sixteenth century, while in Racquet Court, tucked away between Shoe Lane and Poppins' Court, are some well-preserved Queen Anne houses. The quaintest lane we have left must surely be Neville Court, which runs between Shoe Lane and Fetter Lane. Here are some "Dutch" houses, with genuine front gardens, built in the reign of William III, in one of which lived Lord Neville, while another was occupied in our own time by the pioneer Labour member, Mr. Keir Hardie. At the corner of the court is the Moravian Chapel where Richard Baxter lectured. Bartlett Buildings, Holborn and Crane Court also have houses of this date, and the whole neighbourhood is redolent of the late seventeenth century, its Puritanism and its conventicles.

If one dwells rather lengthily on this period it is because so much that is woven into the texture of London life and society has its roots in these days. The theatre took a new lease of life after the Restoration and shifted its headquarters from the northern and southern outskirts of the city to its present abiding place in the West End. The Drury Lane Theatre, which may be called the parent of the present theatre (although there had been a theatre in Drury Lane since Shakespeare's time) was built in 1663 and occupied by the king's players under the management of Thomas Killigrew, while the duke's players were appearing at the Duke's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields (on the site of which the Royal College of Surgeons now stands). Drury Lane Theatre was burned down in 1672 and rebuilt to the design of Wren. It at once became the leading playhouse in London, and its history since then is the history of the London stage, with the names of Betterton, Garrick, Mrs. Siddons, Kemble, Macready and Charles Kean to make it illustrious. The present theatre, the fourth on the site, was built in 1812 after the third, of which Sheridan was part proprietor, was burned down. It was while watching the conflagration from a neighbouring window that Sheridan, to whom the disaster meant financial ruin, observed, when urged to leave the heartbreaking scene, that "it was hard if a man could not sit by his own fireside."

Covent Garden Theatre was built much later when, as Steele said, "Covent Garden was the Heart of the Town." It was opened in 1733 by John Rich, the same who had produced the *Beggar's Opera* in 1728



(which had made him gay and Gay rich). This theatre also suffered a disastrous fire and its re-opening in 1809 led to the famous O.P. riots—a manifestation of the objections of the public to the increased prices of admission. It was here in 1741 that the *Messiah* was produced, with Handel as conductor, and the theatre eventually became the recognized centre for Italian Opera, the fashionable theatrical entertainment of the nineteenth century. The present theatre is the third, and dates from 1858. It has the reputation of possessing the finest acoustic properties of any theatre in the world.

Pepys often visited Drury Lane and saw Shakespeare, which did not attract him. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was the "most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life." But he thoroughly enjoyed the change from the stiff Puritan regime. "But, lord!" he says, "to see the difference of the times and but two years gone." The modern "comedy of manners" began with the Restoration in the plays of Wycherley and Congreve, who are the true precursors of Sheridan, of Oscar Wilde and of Mr. Pinero—though their licentiousness has never been approached even in these tolerant days. In fact the Restoration and the complete overthrow of the Puritans and their stern morality led to a freedom and a coarseness unknown to the Jacobean stage. For the first time the women's parts were played by women. As Macaulay says, "The fascination of sex was called in to aid the fascination of art," and the Restoration dramatists took care that the most suggestive lines should be allotted to the young and beautiful actresses who spoke the

prologues and epilogues. All this meant that the respectable citizens and their wives shunned the theatre and those engaged in it, who acquired a generic reputation for loose living and disreputability. In the next century the genius of Garrick, which was wedded to an eminently respectable life, did a great deal to raise the level of the stage and its occupiers in the world of business and domesticity, but the evil reputation was not effectively shattered till almost our own day.

No picture of the life of this time can be complete without reference to the Coffee House, a social, political and literary institution of the first importance from the middle of the seventeenth to the middle of the eighteenth century. At a time when newspapers, political clubs and all the modern apparatus of lectures and debating societies through which the events of the day are made known and subjected to all the processes of discussion and propaganda were either non-existent or existed only in a rudimentary form the coffee houses answered all these purposes. There the wits, the politicians, the poets and the intellectuals foregathered and over the stimulating beverage discussed the evil ways of the ministers, the prospects of the war and the latest poem. The vogue of the coffee house was practically confined to London, which then monopolized more than ever before or since, what we now call the *intelligentsia*. "Foreigners remarked that the coffee house was that which especially distinguished London from all other cities; that the coffee house was the Londoner's home, and that those who wished to find a gentleman commonly asked, not

whether he lived in Fleet Street or Chancery Lane, but whether he frequented the *Grecian* or the *Rainbow*.<sup>1</sup> Every rank in society and every shade of political or religious opinion had its favourite "house of call." In one tobacco could only be consumed in the elegant form of snuff, others reeked with tobacco smoke. There were coffee houses, like *Child's* and *Tom's*, where medical men could be consulted, puritan coffee houses where the language was of the most decorous, and coffee houses frequented by the bloods where the exact opposite was the rule, wits' coffee houses and card-playing coffee houses. And of course coffee was not the only drink obtainable.

The first coffee house was opened in 1652 when a Turkey merchant introduced this grateful beverage into England—the advertisement running, "The virtue of the Coffee Drink, first publicly made and sold in England by Pasqua Rosee in St. Michael's Alley, at the sign of his own head." Then came *Garraway's* in Change Alley where tea was first sold retail, and which flourished till 1866. So rapidly did they spread that the Government became alarmed and in 1675 Charles II issued a proclamation suppressing them "because in such houses divers false, malicious and scandalous reports are devised and spread abroad to the Defamation of His Majesty's Government and to the Disturbance of Peace and Quiet of the Realm." But it was impossible to carry out the order and it was withdrawn and by the reign of Queen

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay: *History of England*, chap. iii.

Anne the coffee house was the most prominent social feature of the day.

The most famous of them all was *Wills'*. It stood at the north-west corner of Bow Street and Russell Street, a house in which Charles and Mary Lamb subsequently lived. Here for a time Dryden was the oracle and all the wits and poets came to hear him pronounce judgment on the latest ode or tragedy. Addison and Steele, Swift, Smollet and Johnson followed him and maintained the literary tradition of this famous house. *Button's*, to which Addison transferred his patronage when his play *Cato* made him the leading dramatist of the day, was close by. There was the *Grecian* in Devereux Court, Strand, where two friends quarrelled so bitterly over a Greek accent that they went out and fought a duel in which one was killed; the *St. James'* in St. James's Street, the resort of Whig politicians, and the *Cocoa Tree* where the Tories foregathered; *Jonathan's* in Change Alley was the meeting-place of stock-jobbers—where fortunes were won and lost in the days of the South Sea Bubble.

From these coffee houses, which were really clubs with no membership fees, sprang that peculiarly English institution which has spread over the whole world and whose original and special territory is St. James' and Pall Mall. Many of the clubs such as *White's*, *Brook's*, *Arthur's* and *Boodle's* retain the name of the original coffee house proprietor; but the most world-wide fame has attached itself to the name of *Lloyd's* coffee house which was founded in 1692 at the corner of Lombard Street and Abchurch Lane, became the

resort of shippers and underwriters and developed into the great insurance institution that now operates in its new magnificent building in Leadenhall Street on the site of the old East India House.

London town pursued its stern unbending way in conscious rectitude, absorbed in money-making, little affected by the doings of the gay court but a mile away from Temple Bar. But the busy citizens had a shock when, in 1672, the capricious king, acting on the advice of Ashley, suddenly closed the Exchequer and seized the money there deposited by London goldsmiths (who were still acting as bankers); informing the astonished depositors that their principal was gone and it was only convenient to pay the interest. The sum involved (in effect the National Debt of that day) was £1,300,000, a sum equal intrinsically to between three and four millions of our money, but relatively to the total wealth of the city immensely greater. Several mercantile houses broke, but the city quickly recovered its prosperity and soon it was taking a step which contributed greatly towards establishing its position as the financial centre of the world by founding the Bank of England.

But meanwhile, there had happened an event which had no unimportant influence on the commercial progress of London. The Huguenots were expelled from France in 1685 and, as they were amongst the most industrious and intelligent of the inhabitants of that country, they were welcomed by their co-religionists in London and other populous centres. Into this country they brought their own specialized trades. Many settled in Soho as silversmiths, a large

number of them in Spitalfields where they established their industry of silk weaving. It flourished for a century and a half in the hands of these sober Frenchmen, but it has now entirely deserted the district, where a new, spacious market for vegetables, serving as the Covent Garden of East London, has recently been erected. But still in the streets round about are to be seen, in the top and attic storeys, the large light rooms where worked the "pale weaver at his window seen." But the "squalid streets of Bethnal Green" are no longer so squalid as in Matthew Arnold's day, and in its fine museum are preserved many lovely examples of the former Spitalfields weavers' art.

The Bank of England was founded with the double purpose of finding money for the Government's use and stabilizing the credit system of the City of London. The goldsmiths had long been London's bankers, mainly because they were the only people who had rooms strong enough wherein to store precious metals. So late as the reign of Charles II there was not a single banking house proper in the City of London, but in 1677 the *Little London Directory* contained the names of thirty-seven goldsmiths who kept "running cashes," thereby indicating their profession as bankers. Among them was James Hoare, whose bank, founded in 1673, continues to the present day at 37 Fleet Street. Child's Bank at 1 Fleet Street is still older, but its identity is now merged in that of Glyn, Mills, Currie and Co. Child's was connected with the great banker of the day, Edward Backwell, who was the chief sufferer when Charles II annexed the

bankers' deposits; Child's, however, had sufficient notice of the impending crash to withdraw their money. The famous Coutts' Bank, which stood in the Strand from 1737 till 1904, when it was moved to the opposite side, was founded as Middleton's in St. Martin's Lane in 1692. Sir Francis Coutts, who was the most important London financier in the reign of George III, married Harriet Mellon, the beautiful actress, who, after his death, married the Duke of St. Albans. Sir Francis Burdett, the Radical Member for Westminster, who played so great a part in the agitation for the Reform Bill, was his son-in-law and the late Baroness Burdett-Coutts his granddaughter.<sup>1</sup> Martin's Bank claims continuous descent, as we have seen, from Sir Thomas Gresham's business.

With all this development the need for a "central" bank soon became evident, and in 1691 a scheme was proposed by a Scotsman, William Paterson, and taken up by the Whig financier, Thomas Montague, Commissioner for the Treasury, for raising a sum of £1,200,000 at the rate of 8 per cent., the subscribers to be incorporated in the name of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England and to be limited to trading in bills of exchange and bullion. They were to be empowered to lend money to the Government, and this was the great advantage of the scheme as it relieved the Treasury officials from the necessity

<sup>1</sup> The town house of this prominent London family at the corner of Stratton Street, Piccadilly, has but recently gone up in flats, and their country house at Highgate (Holly Lodge) developed as a building estate; but close by a charming little piece of rustic planning known as Holly Village stands as a memorial to this gracious and charitable lady.

of going to the city cap in hand and raising small sums from individual tradespeople until their wants were satisfied. The scheme was passed in face of the bitter opposition of the landed interest and the usurers and the existing banks, and in 1694 the Bank commenced operations in the Hall of the Grocers' Company. The present building of the Bank of England, now under reconstruction and enlargement, was built in 1734 but assumed its present rather forbidding appearance under the hands of Sir John Soane in 1827. It has no visible windows, but the grimness of its exterior is relieved by a copy of the elegant Temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli at the north-west angle.

The Bank of England was launched upon its career as the financial centre of the civilized world for over two hundred years, and if its position and prestige have been a trifle shaken by recent events there is every reason to suppose that, by reason of its geographical position, its technical equipment and, above all, its unshakable integrity, it will continue so to function while the world is run on the existing economic basis.



## CHAPTER VI

### GEORGIAN LONDON

WITH the Hanoverians comfortably seated upon the throne, the Protestant succession secured, the Constitution placed upon a firm basis, the city equipped with an efficient machinery for commerce and finance, London left behind its tumultuous and colourful history and settled down to a long period of quiet development which was scarcely again to be disturbed. Civic heroes and rebellious citizens, struggles with kings and strenuous assertions of rights fade away and the placid surface of life is as that of a still water that runs deep.

The building style of Wren and his followers, so grave and serene, so lacking in otiose ornament and in exuberance of detail the last indigenous and original style which arose in England, typified the quiet and unobtrusive lives of the London citizens now cohering into that middle class which, without either the intellectual tolerance or the ignorant bigotry of the classes above and below them, became the "backbone" of the country and eventually assumed the reins of government.

The Georgian continuation of this last and most appropriate style of architecture has left examples in most quarters of London, but especially in those suburbs in which the real life of London was so soon

to be carried on. These suburbs fall into two distinct groups. There were, first, the estates that were developing to the west and north-west of the town—those of the Russells, the Cavendishes, the Portmans, the Grosvenors, sonorous names which now seem racy of the soil of London. The noble families who found themselves in the fortunate position of owning these broad lands had visions of an “unearned increment” accruing to their families, the magnitude of which must have far surpassed their most opulent anticipations. But at least they laid out these estates on what we should now call the best town-planning lines and have left us handsome streets and squares and comely buildings the beauty of which their partial commercialization in some cases and decay in others has not been able to destroy.

The squares are the dominant feature of this planning period, and they remain one of the most precious—not to say priceless—of London’s heritages. The normal pattern is of a square or oblong garden of plane trees and shrubs, well-kept lawns and flower-beds, railed in and separated by a broad roadway from four rows of grave Georgian houses built in terrace fashion with every appearance of dignity in front, but with somewhat dingy and sordid backs, and with no gardens. The central garden was to save this extravagance. A recent official report has disclosed that in London there are 460 open spaces, mostly of this character, covering 400 acres, and they provide breathing spaces and oases of refreshment, which, now that the country is between ten and twenty miles away from them, are

an inestimable boon to jaded London and must at all costs be preserved. We have already noted the laying out of the pioneer squares, Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden, but the series which now swims into our ken may be said to commence with St. James's Square and to terminate with Cadogan Square, laid out about 1870. The lordly St. James's Square was planned and built (between 1663 and 1670) close to the palace, and became at once what it has remained to our day, vastly aristocratic and fashionable. "Little London" it was called in one of Shadwell's plays. Not one of the houses but has had its illustrious inhabitants but the most famous is No. 10, where have lived three Prime Ministers, two of whom are amongst the greatest in our annals, Chatham, Derby, and Gladstone. In fact, fifteen Prime Ministers have lived in St. James's Square. It was round this square that Johnson walked all night with Richard Savage, when they had not a shilling between them to pay for a night's lodging, and he probably had this in his mind when he quoted the lines about the Duchess of Leeds as a final summing-up of the advantages of wealth.

"She shall have all that's fine and fair,  
And the best of silk and satin shall wear,  
And drive in a coach to take the air,  
And have a house in St. James's Square."

Soho Square was laid out by Gregory King in 1681 on land that had been given by Charles II to his son, the Duke of Monmouth. The magnificent house of that elusive and unfortunate love child

occupied the south side. It became the centre for those foreigners—dancers, painters, singers, dancing masters—who were attracted by the wealth of the English aristocracy, and the surrounding courts and streets have ever since been the foreign quarter *par excellence* of London. Golden Square followed in a few years. Both of these squares are now given over to business, though some traces of the original houses still remain, and the old Carlisle House, standing just off the west side of Soho Square, is the house occupied by the celebrated Angelos, father and son, the riding and fencing masters of the nobility and the *haut ton* of the mid-eighteenth century. Bloomsbury Square was built in 1665, the north side being occupied by the magnificent mansion of the Earls of Southampton into which the Russells moved from the Strand. They demolished it in 1800, and at once began to develop the surrounding property. Then was inaugurated that fine piece of town planning which makes Bloomsbury even now the most stately district of its size in London. Russell Square was laid out in 1804, followed by Tavistock Square, Woburn Square, and the rest of the well-designed streets and squares of this distinctive region. It at once assumed an aristocratic character, then gradually sank in the social scale, till now the Georgian houses are in great part converted into hotels and boarding houses. There remains still, however, enough society to make Bloomsbury an intellectual centre, a reputation which the situation of the British Museum does much to enhance.

The Museum is on the site of another noble

mansion, neighbour to that of the Southamptons, belonging to the Duke of Montagu. That house was purchased by the Government in 1753 for £10,000 when the necessity arose for housing the collection of books and curiosities, got together by Sir Hans Sloane, which he left to the nation in return for the modest sum of £20,000. It is to-day of interest to note that the money needed to purchase this and the Harleian collection was raised by a lottery. Sloane was a fashionable physician of the day whose name is perpetuated in the topography of Chelsea, the manor of which he bought. These collections, added to the Cottonian manuscripts, formed the nucleus of the British Museum. In those days England occupied much the same position as the United States do now, as the great collecting country of the world. The new museum was enriched with gifts of manuscripts and ancient sculpture culminating in the Elgin Marbles, the lovely sculptures from the Parthenon at Athens, purchased by Lord Elgin from the Turkish Government to save them from the imminent risk of destruction. When George IV in 1823 presented the valuable library collected by his father and great-grandfather, it was felt to be time to erect a new building, and the present classical pile with its immense Ionic colonnade was designed by Sir Robert Smirke and completed in 1855. It was erected at a time when the English architectural tradition had come to an end and a spirit of enthusiasm for Greek art, intensified by the acquisition of the Elgin Marbles, was struggling for mastery with the Gothic revival. It has been pointed out by

Mr. Beresford Pite<sup>1</sup> that this building created a *genius loci* in Bloomsbury. It was in course of erection "when the design for University College was made in 1827 by William Wilkins, with an obvious hope of excelling the dignity of its neighbour. The Ionic Temple of St. Pancras had just been completed by Charles Inwood, and shortly afterwards the Doric Propyleum of Euston Station was erected by Thomas Hardwick."<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously the new Houses of Parliament were rising in the most flamboyant Gothic style.

Next in order of date to Bloomsbury Square came Grosvenor Square (1695) and Berkeley Square (1698) both witnesses of their owners' appreciation of the possibilities of Mayfair as the residential district for the aristocracy, and of the potentiality of future riches to be derived from this circumstance. It has remained the most opulent quarter of London for well over two hundred years. Between Berkeley Square and Piccadilly stood two great mansions, occupied for the best part of two centuries by two of the great Whig families which ruled the land from the Revolution to the Reform Bill. Devonshire House and its beautiful grounds has disappeared; in its day it was a social and political centre even more influential than Holland House. The other, Lansdowne House, still stands, one of the finest houses in London, though no longer one of the "stately homes of England." It was built by Robert Adam, and bought from Lord Bute by that

<sup>1</sup> Letter to *The Times*, 18th November 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. E. V. Lucas quotes Aubrey Beardsley as saying that Euston Station made it unnecessary to visit Egypt.

sardonic statesman, Shelburne, created Marquis of Lansdowne and known as the "Jesuit of Berkeley Square."

Early in the eighteenth century the country village of St. Marylebone (Mary-le-Bourne, through which ran the Tyburn Brook) and the surrounding manors, were built over by their ducal owners—Portlands, Newcastles, and Devonshires, and the fine straight streets and noble squares bear the names of their families, their country seats and their wives; Harley, Holles and Cavendish, Welbeck, Wigmore and Wimpole, Margaret and Henrietta. The map of this region is a palimpsest, and through the rectangular lay-out wanders the narrow winding Marylebone Lane, which followed the meanderings of the Tyburn Brook. Cavendish Square was built in 1717, and on the north side are to be seen two stone houses built by the princely Duke of Chandos as part of a mansion from which an avenue should extend to his country seat at Canons; a grandiose conception which was frustrated by his death. Portman Square was built between 1764 and 1784, and Manchester Square in 1776, the north side being occupied by Hertford House. Here the fourth Marquis of Hertford made that wonderful collection of pictures and bijouterie which Lady Wallace, his son's widow, bequeathed to Sir John Murray Scott, who handed it over to the nation. There it remains, the greatest private collection ever made, particularly rich in eighteenth-century French art, a "Mecca where every artistic soul shall find refreshment and consolation." Fitzroy Square, now somewhat reduced in status, is interesting from its builders, Robert and James

Adam, its still well-preserved late Georgian houses and its artistic associations, especially with the pre-Raphaelites and the later Camden Town School.

The whole district from Edgware Road to Shore-ditch was covered by the advancing tide of bricks and mortar in the latter half of the century, and even the citizens built their square and circus just outside the city. Finsbury Square was built in 1777 and, perhaps because it was so near the progressive city, was the first public place to be lighted by gas, while its fashionable opposite number, Grosvenor Square, was the last; it indulged in oil lamps up to 1842.

While the fashionable world was filling up the manors contiguous to the city and Westminster, villages some two to four miles out began to attract the notice of the opulent city merchants, who were feeling cramped and restricted in their narrow city lanes. They pined for country air and a country life which they might at least enjoy at the "week-ends," although the phrase had not yet been invented. These village suburbs have long been overwhelmed, but most of them contain, embedded in their nineteenth-century crust of dull streets, some Georgian houses with hooded doors, wrought-iron gates and flat fronts of mellow red brick. In some of these what are now inner suburbs the persistence of this character is very charming. Such is Stoke Newington, a small borough with pleasant leafy roads and surrounded by wide open spaces and a church of 1563, embowered in trees. In 1774 it was described as "a pleasant village near Islington, where a great number of citizens of London have built houses and rendered it extremely popular, more like



a large flourishing town than a village." The type of people who lived in Stoke Newington belonged to that serious dissenting or low church *bourgeoisie* which was then building up the wealth of the city. Of this class was Daniel Defoe, who was educated at Morton's famous dissenting academy, and wrote *Robinson Crusoe* in Church Street. Defoe's *Tour through Great Britain* gives us much information about these suburbs. Of the neighbouring borough, Hackney, he wrote, "This town is so remarkable for the retreat of wealthy citizens, that there is at this time near a hundred coaches kept in it; though I will not join with a certain satirical author, who said of Hackney that there were more coaches than Christians in it."<sup>1</sup> This of what later became known as "evangelical Hackney," while of another neighbour to the north-west, Hampstead, he tells us that "the Jews have particularly fixed upon this town for their country retreats, and some of them are very wealthy."

Hampstead on the top of a hill, beside its glorious heath, in which rose the springs and streams that for so long were the principal sources of water supply for London, long retained its rural character. It sprang into fame as a health resort to which the wealthy resorted to taste its chalybeate wells, towards the end of the seventeenth century. From then onwards it became the resort or the home of

<sup>1</sup> A wistful reminder of what sort of country these inner north-eastern and now, in large part, so sordid suburbs are built over is the names of the stations of the North-Eastern Railway, which runs through them. The traveller on that line passes through, in succession, Bethnal Green, Cambridge Heath, London Fields and Hackney Downs.

wits, painters and poets. The narrow rows and lanes which form the original village are still redolent of the eighteenth century. Here stands Romney's studio, a little way off is the house in which Keats lived and wrote the *Ode to a Nightingale* and much of his greatest work, and in a hollow of the heath, called the Vale of Health, stood Leigh Hunt's cottage. Over the heath Keats, Shelley, and Hunt would roam and Constable loved to paint it. And in that golden morning of the nineteenth century Coleridge was living at Highgate—in the third house in the Grove. It was in front of this house that he gave utterance to those mystical, incomprehensible monologues that so puzzled Lamb and Wordsworth, and here he died in 1834. At the highest point of these northern heights stands Ken Wood, a mansion built by Robert Adam for Lord Mansfield, which the Gordon rioters came out to burn in 1780. They got no further than the "Spaniards," the quaint inn that still blocks the main road from Highgate to Hampstead, for the landlord, divining their fell purpose, plied the leaders with considerable quantities of drink and kept them thus agreeably engaged till a body of troops could be summoned from London. That mansion is now a possession of the people and looks over meadows and a remnant of the primeval Middlesex forest.

Clapham attracted the same type of people as Stoke Newington. As far to the south-west of the city as that is to the north-east it began to grow into a suburb at about the same time, and became the home of an even more famous coterie of religious-minded people, the Clapham Sect. The Thorntons,

Wilberforces and Macaulays were the centre of this group and their evangelizing efforts and, above all, their long and persistent campaign against the slave trade left a very deep impress upon the London life of the nineteenth century. Lord Teignmouth, the founder of the Bible Society, was another strong religious influence. Their mansions and those of other wealthy London merchants stood round the bleak common. Most of them have disappeared, but on the north side still stands a row of mellow early Georgian houses under their immemorial elms. In another, which has disappeared, Samuel Pepys passed his last days. Opposite stood the mansion in which the eccentric and learned Henry Cavendish, the "man who weighed the world," carried out his secret researches on the composition of water, and in the Old Town stands a house where Lord Macaulay spent his childhood.

Streatham is another eighteenth-century suburb, built like Clapham around a heathy common and frequented like Hampstead for its medicinal waters. The visitor may still purchase at Messrs. Curtis' dairy his glass of mineral water, the efficacy of which has survived its fame. Streatham was the home of the Thrales, and Johnson frequently visited them there.

Eastward lies Dulwich, with its public school and picture gallery, set in surprisingly rural surroundings, and a pleasant piece of woodland high up on Sydenham Hill. We have seen how the college was founded by Alleyn, the "Garrick of his time," but the suburb is of later growth and the quiet village is encircled by nineteenth-century streets and villas.

But it still boasts a toll gate, which functions as in pre-railway days, a permanent protest against the hustling spirit of the age.

Still further east lies Greenwich, of whose domed hospital we have noted the beginnings. Greenwich was an important village in Tudor times and was now a growing suburb, its northern neighbour the great Royal Dock and Victualling Yard of Deptford. Here lately had been a strange visitor, no less a man than Peter, Czar of the semi-barbaric Russias, who was working in the dock in 1698 as an ordinary shipwright, but picking up something of ship designing and spending his evenings in the public house with his boon companions, drinking beer, occasionally laced with brandy. Southward lies the famous Blackheath, with its village in Tranquil Vale, where are a few substantial eighteenth-century mansions lining the heath. This great open space has been from the earliest times a favourite place for civic and state receptions and a gathering place for rebels like Wat Tyler, Jack Cade, and Falconbridge. Here the citizens came out to meet Manuel Palæologus, Emperor of the East (1400), and Sigismund, Emperor of the West (1416), when these exotic potentates came on visits to the Plantagenets. Henry V on his return from Agincourt, Anne of Cleves with splendid pageantry meeting her disappointed bridegroom, Charles II on his return from exile, all had their civic welcomes and their joyous entries on the wide open space of Blackheath, now sacred to football and golf. So that Blackheath touches the fringes of London's history frequently and picturesquely.

The drab nineteenth century overlaid these residential districts with interminable rows of meanly built houses, but the wanderer who is seeking remains and reminders of more gracious days cannot fail to be rewarded in all of them. Somebody once observed to Browning that there was no romance left except in Italy. "Well," replied he, "I should make an exception in favour of Camberwell." Camberwell is a purely nineteenth-century suburb, but Browning was born there, and Blake saw angels in the trees of Peckham Rye near by, while Ruskin lived in Denmark Hill, the umbrageous road that divides it from sylvan Dulwich, and whence Ruskin tells us he was driven when he saw the Crystal Palace rising on the opposite slope of Sydenham Hill. But we have the memory of Ruskin in the lovely park which has been laid out on the site of the house and grounds of his father, the wine merchant. It is one of that number of charming and lovingly cultivated pleasantries which are the chief contributions of the last half-century to the amenities of London.

Kensington is the "old Court suburb" of Leigh Hunt. When George I ascended the throne the court had moved here from Whitehall, whose riverside climate did not suit the delicate constitution of William III. Kensington was then an ancient village with no suburban features, not so remote as earlier royal palaces at Eltham, Greenwich, Richmond and Hampton Court, but still quite in the country. William III, as soon as he came to the throne, purchased the house of the Earl of Nottingham, on the site of the old manor of Neyte (whence

Knightsbridge), and made it his residence with some additions, chiefly the beautiful orangery by Wren. Here his shattered frame sought rest from the cares of state, and Kensington quickly became a fashionable suburb. Kensington Square was built in 1698, and remains precariously a graceful eighteenth-century square, in which Addison and Steele have lived and where the queen's maids of honour were boarded out. Although Kensington has now become a busy shopping centre with colossal stores, the atmosphere of the eighteenth century still clings about some of its by-ways. In later days two famous nineteenth-century men of letters, who have done more than any others to bring the preceding century to life and endow it with vitality, had their abode. Thackeray wrote *Vanity Fair* in 16 Young Street, and in the days of his success built himself a house in Palace Green (the home of the "nabobs" even as in later days Park Lane became the Mecca of South African millionaires), and here he died in 1865. Lord Macaulay migrating from Clapham and Bloomsbury, lived and died in Holly Lodge on Campden Hill, a sylvan height between the home of his friend at Holland House and that of his hero in Kensington Palace.

The beautiful gardens, which, with the adjoining Hyde Park, make an expanse of meadows, lakes, gardens and avenues one square mile in extent and unequalled for beauty and spaciousness in any other city, were laid out by Queen Anne, but owe their present appearance to Queen Caroline, the consort of George II, and the faithful supporter of Walpole. "Capability" Brown was employed to create the

lovely gardens we still enjoy. Hyde Park had been enclosed by Henry VIII to provide the pleasures of the chase, while, later, that sporting monarch, Charles II, held horse races there to remind him of his favourite but distant Newmarket. Now Caroline created the Serpentine out of a string of ponds fed by the Westbourne, and the Park and Gardens became and remained throughout the nineteenth century the afternoon lounge of fashion and the evening playground of the proletariat.

While the suburbs were growing in population and opulence the cause of all this, the commercial activity of the city, was well set upon its course of prosperity. The firm settlement of the Protestant succession, Marlborough's glorious victories, and the commercial advantages which accrued from the treaty of Utrecht, the peaceful accession of the Hanoverian line and the inglorious termination of the attempt of the Old Pretender to regain the throne in 1715 set the wheels of commerce and finance running more smoothly and swiftly than ever; until another shock was felt.

Soon after his accession George I addressed the mayor and aldermen in these terms, "I have lately been made sensible of what consequence the City of London is and therefore shall be sure to take all their privileges and interests into my particular protection." He was as good as his word and, under the wise counsels of Walpole and the Whigs, left the city alone as no sovereign had ever done before. This security engendered optimism and the optimism a speculating and adventurous spirit recalling the brave Elizabethan days—and yet very unlike the

spirit of those spacious times. A glamour had always been hovering over the fabled wealth of the South Seas, and a company had been formed which, in return for a monopoly of the trade with South America, was to pay off a large part of the National Debt. Walpole warned the city against the dreams of untold wealth fostered by the charter granted them, but people began to clamour for shares, and once the ball was set rolling nothing could stop the citizens in the novel and unaccustomed pursuit of wealth for nothing. "For several years," says Lecky,<sup>1</sup> "a spirit of reckless speculation had been spreading through England. Stock jobbing had become a favourite profession." And now "all the devices of the London Stock Exchange were employed to raise the price of stock artificially." Never had such an opportunity presented itself to the citizens of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice. "Stars and garters mingled with squabbling Jews and great ladies pawned their jewels in order to gamble in the Alley."<sup>2</sup> The £100 stock rose in one day from £130 to £300. In a few months it reached £1000 and then—a rumour got about that directors were selling out. The South Sea Bubble burst and ruin was widespread, for there was no limited liability in those days and speculators had to meet the corporate liabilities of the companies in which they were concerned to the full extent of their possessions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was dismissed and sent to the Tower. The Postmaster-General (deeply involved) committed suicide. His

<sup>1</sup> *History of England in the Eighteenth Century.*

<sup>2</sup> Walford: *Old and New London.*



son, the Secretary of State, died of terror at the investigation. But the extent of the ruin was not limited to the victims of the South Sea craze. Cunning gentlemen had launched schemes of an appalling incredibility and gathered the money of the investing public with an unheard-of facility. A thousand companies were floated. One was "Puckle's Machine Company for discharging round and square cannon balls and bullets and making a total revolution in the art of war." Another was a "Wheel for perpetual motion. Capital £1,000,000!" One projector announced a company "For an undertaking which shall in due time be revealed, two guineas to be paid down and afterwards to receive a share of a hundred, with a disclosure of its object." In a single morning he received 2000 guineas, with which he decamped. It has been calculated that the total capital asked for by the promoters of these schemes was £300,000,000, which even compared with the astronomical figures of our own financial transactions is a respectable sum. In those days it represented six times the National Debt.

This episode was only an extreme manifestation of the gambling spirit that then pervaded the town, especially amongst the upper classes. The clubs, which now began to supplant the coffee houses as the centre of (masculine) social life, were given up to the hectic joys of the gaming table. White's in St. James's Street which, on the strength of its foundation in 1698 claims to be the oldest club in the world, was the shrine at which the goddess was worshipped by the Tory bloods, while Brooks's opposite met the needs of the scions of the Whig houses. The latter

was indeed not founded till 1778, but it was in time to stage the gambling exploits of Fox, Sheridan, George Selwyn and the rest of that brilliant and reckless set. The gambling needs of the middle and lower classes were met by the lotteries which flourished in remarkable profusion. The British Museum was practically founded on the proceeds of a lottery, and the erection of Westminster Bridge was financed in the same way.

It seems to-day very strange that London Bridge should have waited so long for an associate or rival in the duty of facilitating transpontine traffic, but the opposition of the powerful watermen's interest and a curious reverence for the unique position of London Bridge had so far forbidden the construction of a second bridge, until indeed the city and Westminster and the suburbs comprised a population of some seven hundred thousand. Westminster Bridge was completed in 1750, and some fifty years later Wordsworth wrote that noble appreciation of the river view in his first great sonnet, *Lines on Westminster Bridge*:

“The city now doth like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie,  
Open unto the earth and to the sky,  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.”

But what a different scene he looked upon! The stupendous expanse of the Houses of Parliament in front and, behind, the County Hall and St. Thomas's Hospital were not there. Neither was the ugly mass

of Charing Cross Station. Where the long, graceful line of the Embankment hems in the river was muddy foreshore down to which ran gardens with water gates. There was no Hungerford or Waterloo Bridge, but the impressive mass of Chambers's Somerset House could be seen in its completeness, white, shining, and only sixteen years old. One dome, that of St. Paul's, reared high on the city hill, could be seen by turning round; and Lambeth Palace on the left and Westminster Hall and the other buildings of the Palace amidst their huddle of squalid buildings in front made a mediæval setting. The river would be much busier with boats and shipping and with wharves on the east bank while the Surrey Hills and the Northern Heights would frame the enchanting picture to the south and north. That bridge lasted till 1862, when the present bridge was built.

The collapse of the South Sea boom and the widespread losses it entailed seems to have had very little effect on the commercial development of the city. But gambling was by no means the worst of the evils that afflicted the body civic, and indeed it would be hard to find a period when lawlessness was so prevalent as in the first half of the eighteenth century. The fact was that the organization of security and the spread of education had not kept pace with the growth of population and wealth. The discipline of the Church and of the gilds, imperfect and crude in their methods as they may have been, had imposed some salutary checks upon man's natural depravity; but they were gone and their place had not yet been taken by the schools and the police.

These were the days when the earliest heroes of our criminal annals flourished—Jack Sheppard, whose escapes from Newgate made him a popular idol; Jonathan Wild, who played the double part of thief catcher and fence; and Dick Turpin, the highwayman, who was hanged in 1739. The trade of the highwayman and footpad flourished exceedingly. So unsafe were the roads in and around the metropolis that promoters of entertainments in the suburbs advertised on their playbills, "A horse patrol will be sent in the New Road for the protection of the Nobility and Gentry who go from the squares and that end of the town." The New Road was the great arterial road which had recently been built from Paddington to the city—Marylebone Road, Euston Road, and City Road.

Yet the doings of the professional criminals were hardly so terrible to peaceful citizens as the exploits of the dissolute young men of fashion who called themselves "Mohocks." Milton refers to them, or rather their predecessors, in the well-known lines from *Paradise Lost*:

"When night  
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons  
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine."

These bullies were "accustomed to sally out drunk into the streets to hunt the passers-by and to subject them in mere wantonness to the most atrocious outrages."<sup>1</sup> An account of the favourite tortures practised by them is given by Addison in the

<sup>1</sup> Lecky: *op. cit.*

*Spectator*, but a recital of the list would be neither edifying nor amusing. Occasionally an arrest was made but the cessation of these atrocities was due rather to the fact that the sport went out of fashion than to any action of the authorities.

The arrangements made for the protection of life and property in the streets of London were inconceivably ineffective. They were committed to the care of a class of watchmen who were "chosen out of those poor decrepit people who are, from their want of bodily strength, rendered incapable of getting a livelihood by work. These men, armed only with a pole which some of them are scarcely able to lift, are to secure the persons and houses of His Majesty's subjects from the attacks of gangs of young, bold, desperate and well-armed villains. If the poor old fellows should run away, no one, I think, can wonder, unless it be that they were able to make their escape." So wrote Henry Fielding of the London police in *Amelia*, and Fielding became a Bow Street magistrate. In that capacity he himself did something to improve matters when he instituted a body of picked police centred in Bow Street and known as the Bow Street runners. Something more was done towards making the streets safe when a new scheme for lighting London was introduced in 1736 under which fifteen thousand lamps were erected. But the evils were not done away with until the next century—for the trick of overthrowing the watchman, or "Charley," in his box and leaving him lying with the box on top of him till a neighbouring Charley or charitably disposed wayfarer restored him to equilibrium,

continued to be a sport of the young bloods of the Regency.<sup>1</sup> It was only when the establishment of Peel's police force in 1826 opposed youth and strength and discipline to the exuberance of hot-blooded youth and the craft of the criminal that the streets became safe.

With these various forms of moral delinquency afflicting the upper and the lower strata of society, London was an exciting place to live in and never more so than when an attack seemed to be intended upon the sacred principle of liberty and a popular hero had to be supported. Then the London populace, inflamed with a passion for such abstractions as liberty and justice, arose in its thousands and was ready for any adventure. It was a strange passion this for a mob which had nothing to save but its rags and was completely unenfranchised; but the moral indignation was mainly a cloak for the licence of the desperate and submerged citizens. So, when John Wilkes, that intrepid, witty, ill-favoured rake was prosecuted on a "general warrant" for the publication of an attack on the King's Speech in the famous No. 45 of his journal the *North Briton* (1763), he at once became the idol of the populace and for years a struggle between the mob and the authorities raged under the slogan of "Wilkes and No. 45 for ever." Prosecution, imprisonment, release, triumph, exile and return culminated in his return at the top of the poll in the Middlesex election of 1768—a real democratic triumph in those days of corrupt elections.

But the story of the struggle belongs to the

<sup>1</sup> See Pierce Egan's *Tom and Jerry*.

history of England rather than to that of London. Forbidden to sit in the House and persecuted with all the ingenuity (which did not amount to much) of the Government of the day, Wilkes ended his career, if not in the odour of sanctity, at least in that of respectability, as Lord Mayor of London; and his obelisk is in Ludgate Circus to this day. He was a great and characteristic London figure, and he did not pass away before assuring George III that "he had never been a Wilkite."

"In the year 1789 there were found in this nation men deluded enough on pretences of zeal and piety to make a desperate attempt which would have consumed all the glory and power of this country in the flames of London, and buried all law, order and religion under the ruins of the metropolis of the Protestant." Thus Edmund Burke wrote of the disastrous riots, the last serious outbreak of religious fanaticism that the city was to see, led by that crazy aristocrat, Lord George Gordon, in 1780. The occasion was merely the removal of some minor Roman Catholic disabilities, but throughout the century London suffered from a "No Popery" complex, and in the temper of that day it was fatally easy to arouse the religious fanaticism of the populace. On 2nd June fifty thousand "riotous Protestants" assembled in St. George's Fields to march to Westminster. They now had three bridges they could cross, and the formidable mob converged upon the Houses of Parliament. Dragoons protected the House, but there was nothing to protect the streets of London, and for eight days the city was in the hands of a drunken and fanatical mob,

whose leader was a lunatic. Roman Catholic chapels were looted and burnt. Lord Chief Justice Mansfield's priceless library in Bloomsbury Square was made into a bonfire, and his country house at Hampstead was only saved in the way we have related. The riot culminated in an attack on Newgate. With fire, pickaxes and crowbars that stronghold was burst into and its bewildered prisoners driven into the street, after a scene which foreshadowed the taking of the Bastille nine years later. Gordon's heroes then fired the other prisons, the Fleet, Bridewell, the Clink (in the Borough), and Clerkenwell, and set the prisoners free. They would then have attacked the Bank of England, but here John Wilkes was at hand with a detachment of guards and finally the military were called out, after a week of incredible hesitation, and put an end to the orgy. Lord George got off on the plea advanced by the brilliant Erskine that he had "not approved" the action of his followers.

Some of the horror of these wild scenes was due to the influence of gin. Spirit drinking amongst the poor—whose condition, with sweated wages, and slum dwellings the like of which are unknown in the worst slums of to-day, was pitiable—had attained amazing proportions in London. Until the beginning of the century the popular drink was beer and great quantities of this wholesome beverage were drunk without any noticeably deleterious effects. But the Restoration Government forbade the importation of spirits from France and an extensive trade in gin distilling was the consequence. The alluring qualities of that spirit were soon apparent.



"The fatal passion for drink," says Lecky, "was at once and irrevocably planted in the nation." It was declared that the greater part of the poverty and crime in London was traceable to this single cause. Retailers of gin hung out boards proclaiming that their customers could get "drunk for a penny and dead drunk for twopence," and straw in which to sleep off the effects could be had free. The worst exaggerations of gin drinking gradually gave way before stricter licensing laws and the fervid evangelical oratory of the Wesleys and Whitefield, whose terrible warnings of the fate awaiting gin drinkers had more than a little effect in promoting temperance—but drunkenness remained the besetting sin of the Londoner until well into our own time. Education, religious appeals, stricter licensing laws and higher excise duties have gone far to remove what was once the curse of London life.

Hogarth, our first great English painter, has depicted for us the horrors of this vice in his terrible picture of *Gin Lane*. As befitted a middle class Londoner—his father was a schoolmaster in Bartholomew Close—Hogarth was a great castigator of vice and was almost greater as a moralist and a satirist than as a painter, and the sordid and vicious side of life in London in the eighteenth century has been vividly recorded in his work. He was a complete Londoner and died in Chiswick, where his little red brick Georgian house in Swan Lane is now a Hogarth museum preserved for the nation.

The history of London town, however, was not entirely one of riot and debauchery. Embedded between the upper and the lower layers of profligacy

was that solid core of respectable and God-fearing citizens, which gave a character to this century and the next of business rectitude and moral restraint. The last Parliament of Queen Anne ordered fifty new churches to be built in the teeming western suburbs, "to give that part of London the air of the capital of a Christian country." Many of them were built by Wren and his school, men like Hawksmoor and that gifted architect Gibbs, "who built the only churches in London which approach the freedom and beauty of Wren's design."<sup>1</sup> The first to be built, St. Mary le Strand, was his, but the most original was Hawksmoor's St. George's, Bloomsbury, with the strange steeple, a copy of the Mausoleum of Hallicarnasus, surmounted by a statue of George I.

"But George's good subjects, the Bloomsbury people,  
Instead of the church made him head of the steeple."

Many civic improvements were undertaken during the reigns of the first two Georges. The Fleet River was at last covered in and the foul and noisome ditch was put underground to serve the purpose of a sewer. It now runs under Farringdon Street and discharges itself into the Thames under Blackfriars Bridge. The gates, which were a great hindrance to the ever-growing traffic, were pulled down. Their materials have disappeared, but a quaint statue of Queen Elizabeth, which adorned Ludgate, has been placed in a niche over the porch of St. Dunstan's

<sup>1</sup> Walter Godfrey: *History of Architecture in London*.

Church in Fleet Street. Newgate was the last gate to go; it was demolished in 1777. Temple Bar which, of course, was not one of the city gates, stood till 1878 when, on the building of the new Law Courts, it was pulled down and its place marked by the statue of an amorphous monster popularly referred to as a griffin. New bridges were built. Westminster was completed in 1750; Blackfriars was opened for traffic in 1769, and a fine wide boulevard, the Blackfriars Road, was driven through the Southwark slums to the St. George's fields, this being followed by rapid building development. Waterloo Bridge, the oldest bridge now standing in London, was built by John Rennie in 1817. It has been universally admired for its fine proportions and stately design and the way it fits into Somerset House, and efforts are being made to preserve this noble civic monument.

As the day of the railway approached the traffic across the river was becoming so congested that Southwark Bridge was opened in 1819, and by that time the question of replacing the hoary old London Bridge by a new structure had become urgent. The decrepit houses which bordered it were pulled down in 1762, and in 1823 a new bridge was decided on. This, the existing handsome structure, was designed by that *pontifex maximus* John Rennie, who lived while it was being built at a house in Stamford Street, recently pulled down, and it was completed by his son, Sir John Rennie, in 1831. It stands a little higher up the stream than the old bridge and has five arches instead of twenty. There was no bridge below it until 1894, when the Tower Bridge

was opened. The two lofty iron towers from which the central portion of the bridge is lifted to allow tall ships to pass, were cased in a covering of brick and stone in a style to accord with the Gothic character of the Tower of London and was much criticized for its "falseness" at the time. But we have become used to this kind of camouflage to-day: the bridge, seen from London Bridge, has a striking architectural effect.

An æsthetic influence second only to that of Wren was making itself felt in London through the genius of the Brothers Adam, under whom the art of domestic decoration reached the highest point it has attained in our country. Their work can still be studied in innumerable houses and in the South Kensington Museum, where moulded ceilings, fanlights with cobweb lines, refined fireplaces, mahogany doors, staircases with charming iron balustrading bear the mark of the delicate art of the Adams and their school. Their most conspicuous monument is the buildings of the Adelphi between the Strand and the Embankment, an assemblage of terraces built as a coherent and harmonious whole upon a series of enormous and rather terrifying arches. It was built in 1761 and is now in imminent danger of destruction. Some of their other achievements we have already mentioned—Fitzroy Square, Lansdowne House, Ken Wood—but one of the most charmingly characteristic is Boodle's Club in St. James's Street, the appearance of which, with its pediment of slender mouldings and its oval medallions, most convincingly brings the whole spirit of the age into our consciousness. Another is the

beautiful stone screen standing before the old Admiralty buildings in Whitehall. The shop front of Messrs. Fribourg and Theyer in the Haymarket with its small-paned low windows gives us another engaging glimpse of what the streets of London looked like two hundred years ago.

The Adelphi is not only of interest architecturally. In the middle of this century the art of polite life in London was at its best and the young Scottish architects entered fully into and gave expression to its elegance, gaiety, and grace; and the Adelphi itself was one of the centres of this delightful social intercourse. Garrick, in the height of his fame as the leading actor not only in London but in Europe, lived in Adelphi Terrace (No. 5), and here he held those parties which Dr. Johnson, Dr. Burney, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Hannah More frequented, and here he died (1779). A few doors off Turner and Girtin, who made the British art of the next century illustrious, were studying painting under Monro.

The effect of the Adams' beautiful interiors was much enhanced by the lovely furniture that Chippendale and Sheraton and their disciples were now turning out. Their art is distinguished by graceful lines and a solidity without heaviness which suited a period when polite life was most fully developed. A century which the nineteenth century through the mouth of Thomas Carlyle denounced as "Opu-  
lent in accumulated falsities as never century was" offers to us, who see it in better perspective, a life, a literature and an art of which moderation, proportion and common sense are the guiding principles.

The central figure of its social intercourse was that

of Dr. Johnson in the biography of whom by his admiring friend Boswell we get an intimate picture of the life of the times. Johnson came to London in 1737 and after some struggles, a hint of which we have caught in Berkeley Square and in St. John's Gate, he obtained a commission to compile a *Dictionary* of the English language for the sum of 1500 guineas. This great work, though not distinguished by philological scholarship, is nevertheless a great literary monument. To quote Carlyle again: "Looking to its clearness of definition, its general solidity, honesty, insight and successful method it may be called the best of all dictionaries." The house in which Johnson completed this work after seven years' labour stands in Gough Square, and is now preserved as a Johnson Museum. The pew in which every Sunday he exercised his simple piety is in St. Clement Danes. The inns which he frequented have mostly disappeared or been rebuilt but an authentic survival of his day is the old "Cheshire Cheese," in Fleet Street, which shows us the Doctor's chair in the corner where he sat. His connection with it is doubtful, but it is unlikely that he failed to patronize this tavern. He was the supreme Londoner, who found his greatest enjoyment in the comfort and sociability of tavern life. "No, sir," he said once, "there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn." With him the cultivation of good fellowship did not depend on alcoholic excitement. When Johnson and his friends gave a feast to Mrs. Lennox at the Devil Tavern in Fleet Street (where Child's Bank is now—

it was a favourite haunt too of Ben Jonson) we are told that "at 5 a.m. Johnson's face shone with meridian splendour, though his drink had only been lemonade," and coffee and tea were his most cherished stimulants. He disdained the country, "one green field being very like another green field." "They who are content to live in the country are *fit* for the country," he used to say. "When a man is tired of London he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." The tavern life in which he found the summit of human bliss was the transition from the coffee house life of Dryden, Steele, Pope, and Addison to the club life of the nineteenth century. He himself, with Reynolds, founded "The Club" which met in the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, and which numbered amongst its members the choicest spirits of the age: Burke, Goldsmith, Garrick, and Sheridan were amongst them. Reynolds was then living at 43 Leicester Square, where his studio is now the auction room of a well-known firm, so that his pictures are sometimes put up for sale where they were painted. He was the President of the Royal Academy and the most sought-after painter in England. He died in 1792, eight years after his friend Johnson. He lies in St. Paul's and Johnson in the Abbey.

## CHAPTER VII

### NINETEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

THE deaths of Johnson and Reynolds coincided with the end of an epoch. Democracy and machinery, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution were to make a new country, a new town, and a new social system. In the half-century from 1775 to 1825 a remarkable number of men were born in London whose minds were to direct the thought and achievement of the new era thus ushered in. To mention some of the more outstanding is to give a list of names probably unsurpassed in an equal period of time in the history of any city.

In 1775 Charles Lamb, the most beloved Londoner of them all, was born in Crown Office Row in the Inner Temple. His passion for London equalled that of Johnson, his kindliness and humour have brightened many dull spots in the town and suburbs, for his homes in London were many and the East India House,<sup>1</sup> in Leadenhall Street, where he laboured diligently at uncongenial tasks, held many recollections of his whimsical talk. The cottage in which he lived in Duncan Terrace, Islington, stands on the banks of the New River (now covered in) into which his friend Dyer walked on leaving his

<sup>1</sup> It is now demolished, and its accumulated books and other treasures are in the India Office.



house one night; and he was buried in the churchyard at Edmonton in 1834. In the same year was born in Maiden Lane, William Mallord Turner, the barber's son and glorious painter who lived and died in a house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, overlooking his beloved Thames. He died in 1851, having left his money to the poor and his pictures to the nation. They glow in splendour from the walls of the Turner Room in the Tate Gallery, while he lies in St. Paul's Crypt over against Reynolds. After an interval of twenty years in 1795 John Keats was born at the Hoop and Swan, Finsbury Pavement, where his father was a livery stable-keeper. He was pre-eminently the "cockney" poet, a name bestowed upon him in derision by bitter critics but of which we may be proud, for never, surely, has the cockney spirit expressed itself in so ethereal a form. His house in Keats Grove, Hampstead, is preserved. He died in 1821; his bones lie in Rome, not far from the place where soon after were deposited the remains of Shelley; but, to quote the noble lines penned by the latter:

"he is a portion of the loveliness  
Which once he made more lovely."

In contrast to these three men of lowly birth comes the patrician, Lord Byron, who saw the light at 24 Holles Street in 1788. The house in which he had rooms at No. 4 Bennet Street, St. James, survives in its original condition. So does the Albany in Piccadilly where he had chambers. Again in contrast to Keats no man has ever had such full

recognition of his genius in his lifetime. "His fame over his living head like heaven is bent." But, as Charles Lamb said, "He was great in so little a way." Posterity has reversed the contemporary verdicts, but he too died untimely, at Missolonghi, and in a noble cause, in 1824; and the authorities would not permit his body to be laid in Westminster.

Belonging, not to the patrician, but to the comfortable middle class, Beaconsfield, born at 22 Theobalds Road in 1804, John Stuart Mill, born in Rodney Street, Pentonville, in 1809, Browning, born in Southampton Street, Camberwell, in 1812, and Ruskin, born at 54 Hunter Street in 1819, were four of the more dazzling inheritors of fulfilled renown, makers of thought and creators of ideas in the prosperous, easy Victorian world. Beaconsfield has set his stamp upon the conservative and imperialistic thought of to-day. His birth was registered at the ancient Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in Bevis Marks. He was baptized into the Christian church at St. Andrew's, Holborn, lived his boyhood at 6 Bloomsbury Square, and his married life at 29 Park Lane, and died at 19 Curzon Street in 1881 and was buried in the Abbey. Mill was the high priest of liberalism and of political economy. He had a profound influence on advanced political thought and advocated the emancipation of woman. He died at Avignon in 1873. Browning enlarged the bounds of poetry and created a cult for the obscurely profound. It was at 50 Wimpole Street that he met Elizabeth Barrett and took her from her too Victorian father and married her in St. Marylebone Church. After her death he lived at 19 Warwick

Crescent on the Regent's Canal, which reminded him of Venice, his spiritual home. He died in 1889, and is buried in the Abbey. Ruskin led the revolt against the materialism that was destroying the art of England and pointed the way to a mode of life in which a higher value should be set upon the things of the spirit. He spent all his London life after leaving Hunter Street at Herne Hill and 163 Denmark Hill. He died in 1899, full of years and honours and the object of adoration of numerous Ruskin societies.

The list of "seminal" men born in London in this wonderful half-century can be extended; but only the brightest among the minor lights can be mentioned. Tom Hood, who could move to laughter or tears with equal facility, was born in the Poultry in 1799. Leigh Hunt, that feckless and lovable man and discerning critic, who was a thorn in the side of his neighbour Carlyle when he lived at 10 Upper Cheyne Row, annoyed the lordly Byron with his brood of undisciplined children and was unkindly satirized by Dickens as Harold Skimpole, was born at Southgate in 1784. William Morris, great both as poet and painter, who had the happiness of destroying the Victorian taste in furniture and decoration and re-introducing some artistic feeling into the home, was born at Walthamstow in 1809. Neither Southgate nor Walthamstow is actually in London, but both are near enough to give its inhabitants a London status. When to these we add the names of those contemporaries who, though born elsewhere, were Londoners by adoption, we light upon the names of three giants: Carlyle (1795-1881),

Thackeray (1811-1863) and Dickens (1812-1869). Carlyle came to London in 1834 and took a house at 24 Cheyne Row in Chelsea, where he spent the remainder of his life smoking and arguing and behaving like an oracle; which indeed he was, for men came from far and near to see him and hear him talk. Emerson when in England often visited the gruff philosopher, and Tennyson would come and smoke with him. George Henry Lewes used to excite Carlyle to a violent argument by the device of agreeing with all he said. He brought Herbert Spencer, another of the group clustering around George Eliot in St. John's Wood. But Carlyle "had no use" for the sophisms of Spencer, that "never-ending ass" as he called him. George Eliot herself came to live at 4 Cheyne Walk in 1864, where she died in 1880. Neighbouring close was Rossetti (who nearly comes into our category, having been born in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, in 1828). In 1862 he came with George Meredith to live at the beautiful house, No. 16 Cheyne Walk, which possesses one of the most beautiful wrought-iron gates in London. His contacts with Carlyle in this intellectual centre were of the scantiest. While the latter's house was the shrine to which philosophers and men of letters made pilgrimage, Rossetti's was the "Mecca of the 'romantic' devotee in both pictorial and literary art." Carlyle's beloved and charming but not too patient wife died in 1866 and left him full of bitter remorse that he had not made her life happier. The house they occupied is now a very living museum of their effects and household gods.

Of Thackeray we have already spoken, and of his masterly reconstructions of eighteenth-century London; but he has also exhibited to us the London of his own day in *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis* and other of his novels, which show an intimate knowledge especially of upper class types and their servants. Thackeray was a lovable man informed with a great humanity; and he has left us in *Costigan* and *Major Pendennis* and *Becky Sharp* pictures of types that will exist as long as human nature.

Of the place that Dickens holds in the tradition of London it is difficult to exaggerate the importance. He not only pervaded in body and spirit her streets and social haunts, he created Londoners so numerous and so richly varied in character that they constitute a world. Human nature in its essentials and in its peculiarities was the stuff from which he has formed this fascinating world and, save Shakespeare, no one has left us so many immortal types.

It was the great age of transition: from the stage coach to the railway, from oligarchy to democracy, from handicraft to the machine. So much that was traditional came to an end, so many new social habits were forming. Such a time was rich in "characters" and Dickens seized them, remoulded them and sent them down the centuries with a message from his age to all ages.

The London of his day is fast disappearing, but here and there one can recapture the spirit of those vanished phases of London life. Especially is this so in the old Inns of Court. There we can still see Tom Pinch meeting his sister Ruth in Fountain Court, Copperfield interrupting Traddles' merry party in

South Square, Gray's Inn, Bradley Headstone spying on Wrayburn from the Inner Temple Gate. There is the little house in Foster Lane whence the unspeakable James Chuzzlewit went forth to slay Montague Tigg.<sup>1</sup> On the steps of St. Martin's Church, David Copperfield met Peggotty resting in his search for Little Em'ly. The "Grapes" Inn at Limehouse, its square bow window hanging perilously over the river, the "Cheshire Cheese," "Jack Straw's Castle" and some others are left of the mass of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century buildings which in Dickens' day existed—too many in a crazy and mouldering condition. Indeed, the interest and affection with which we regard these relics of the past had no place in Dickens' feelings. The woes of humanity filled his large heart with indignation; and insanitary dwellings, the brutality of the poor laws, the iniquity of debtors' prisons moved him far more than the tumbledown picturesqueness of the buildings in which these evils were perpetuated. No writer of fiction ever put in motion a stronger current of reform than Charles Dickens. Some of the numerous houses he inhabited in London still stand; 13 Johnson Street, one of the homes of his childhood, is now appropriately the David Copperfield Library for Children; 48 Doughty Street, where he lived in the early days of his success, is to be a Dickens Museum. The house which he occupied for the longest time is 1 Devonshire Terrace, at the corner of the Marylebone Road. His house in Tavistock Square, where he built a theatre in the garden and busied himself with his beloved amateur

<sup>1</sup> See Morland: *Dickens Landmarks in London*.

theatricals, has only recently been pulled down. He was buried in the Abbey, which by this time had become more selective in its choice of immortals. He lies under a plain slab close to Browning and Tennyson and Hardy and Doctor Johnson, surrounded by ponderous memorials of those who found a place in the Abbey only by dying when they did.

In her literary output the nineteenth century was to be London's wonder age, not yielding even to the Elizabethan. In commerce and finance she assumed an acknowledged leadership amongst the cities of the world, and light-heartedly accepted her far-reaching responsibilities in the new British Empire. But none of these things is more striking than the woeful degradation of art in the Victorian age. Her artistic history had come to an end. Why did she not repeat the story of Florence, of Venice, and of Athens, which, at the height of their commercial prosperity, produced masterpieces of art—painting, carving, architecture—which have remained the delight and wonder of every succeeding generation? Was it that the trade and manufacture of these cities were founded upon craftsmanship, while that of London was built up on machinery—on an increasingly mechanized way of life? This may not be the complete answer. But it is significant that while the great London artists—Hogarth, Reynolds, Blake and Turner—were products of the eighteenth century (Hogarth was born in 1697), throughout the nineteenth not one painter of the first rank was born, with the possible exception of Rossetti; and he was of foreign extraction. The decay of public taste

combined with a commercialized outlook was indicated in the dreary character of its architecture. While the Georgian architecture reflected the character of London with its streets and squares of houses, well proportioned, dignified, insular (the style has attraction for very few foreigners) that which succeeded it is amorphous, imitation, insincere. The suburbs with their gracious core of eighteenth-century work were filled up with depressing rows of cheap and ugly dwelling-houses. In later years there have been successful attempts to revive the form and spirit of the earlier day and to pick up the threads of the English tradition where it was broken off. Especially in Westminster domestic buildings as beautiful and complete as any in the Wren period have been erected.

The last achievement of organized and well-designed street building, until we come to our own century, lies to the credit of John Nash, one of the architects of the Board of Works, who amassed a large fortune by the speculations in which he engaged for the improvement of the metropolis. In 1813 he built a noble thoroughfare to connect Carlton House, the house of the Prince Regent, with Regent's Park. Carlton House was pulled down in 1827 and its place taken by Carlton Gardens, the home of statesmen and embassies, while its portico went to adorn the façade of the National Gallery. In the centre of the site was erected the Duke of York's Column, the second in time and in artistic merit of London's three—the first in both being Wren's Monument. This granite column, designed by Wyatt, would be more impressive if it com-



Regency character, except Portland Place, whose gentlemanlike houses remind us of the age of bucks and *grands seigneurs*.

In those days of prosperity following the peace and stimulated by the Industrial Revolution, days of

“Unquestioned, overflowing revenue  
Wherewith to embellish state,”

vast building operations were going on in the West End.

The Bank is the geographical centre of London, although the curious enquirer examining those excellent railway maps published by the Underground Railway would not think so. In these maps the Bank is almost on the extreme eastern edge, a striking indication of the westwardly development, inasmuch as although the territory to the east is as wide as that to the west, all the London that matters to the fashionable, administrative and literary sections of society now lies west of the city, the east being given over to docks and the dwellings of the lowly. Charing Cross is and has been for some time the centre of this new London. “Why, sir,” said Dr. Johnson, “Fleet Street has a very animated appearance, but I think the full tide of human existence is at Charing Cross.” From here radiate those streets which the early nineteenth century filled up with massive classic buildings.

At the beginning of the century Charing Cross was a short street leading into Whitehall. At the back were narrow alleys, a mews and a barracks. In 1829 these were cleared away and Trafalgar

Square was laid out. It has been called the first site in Europe, but its capricious boundaries and unplanned surroundings are a denial of that title. The centre was adorned by London's third tall column, a Corinthian pillar topped by the figure of Lord Nelson and completed in 1845. On the north side was built the National Gallery (1824), to house the pictures lately purchased for £57,000 from John Julius Angerstein, and to provide a home for the Royal Academy. It was designed by Wilkins to stand harmoniously by the beautiful church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields by Gibbs (1726). The original church was built here by Henry VIII that he might not be annoyed by funerals passing through the courts of his palace of Whitehall to the mother church of St. Margaret's. The terrace-like road in front of the National Gallery leads us straight into Pall Mall, which owes its name to a ball game played here in the days of the Stuarts, when the young men and women of the sprightly court of Charles II made this their promenade and playground, and when Nell Gwynne would lean over the garden wall of her house, which was on the site of No. 79, and exchange pleasantries with the king as he sauntered in the Mall. A piquant contrast this to the huge and sombre clubs which in this expanding and prosperous period now began to line the south side—the Athenæum, headquarters of all that is most learned and dignified (sixty-nine of its members they say, are buried in the Abbey, and thirty-two in St. Paul's), the Travellers, the Reform, modelled on the Farnese Palace at Rome, and the Carlton, founded by the Duke of Wellington, a copy of

Sansovino's library in Venice. Everything had to be classical then, but a little farther on we get a portion of Schomberg House, where Gainsborough once lived and painted the "Blue Boy," dating from the seventeenth century, and looking strangely out of place here; and just round the corner is Marlborough House, built by Wren, of Dutch bricks, for the great Duke of Marlborough. Opposite, St. James's Street mounts the hill and is famous for another batch of clubs, but of an older generation. There is White's, built in 1753; Boodle's, built in 1765; Brooks's, the successor of Almack's which dated from 1764; and Arthur's on the site of White's Chocolate House, which was established in 1697, notorious for its aristocratic gamblers. Between them these clubs numbered amongst their members all the most famous names of the aristocratic Whig and Tory clans which monopolized the governance of England. At No. 6 is the old-established hat shop of Mr. Lock, who built it about 1760—surely the most unmodern shop in London, with its old-fashioned bow window and its confined space in which three customers make a crowd.

At the top of St. James's Street, Piccadilly runs right and left—a thoroughfare which derives its name from Piccadilly Hall, which once stood at the top of the Haymarket. It was built in 1623 by a tailor who specialized in a kind of ruff called a "pickadillie." The hall became a gambling house. Most of the private mansions that once lined this famous thoroughfare are gone—replaced by shops, flats and hotels; but at its western end stands Apsley House, looking rather forlorn and dreaming of the

days when it was No 1. London. It was built by the Adam brothers and bought by the Duke of Wellington, on whose account its windows were smashed by the mob in Reform Bill days. At the other end is that secluded cloister the Albany, the oldest bachelor chambers in London. Amongst its inhabitants have been Brougham, Byron, Bulwer Lytton, Macaulay and Gladstone, and it looks as if it might be long overlooked by the destroyers. There still stands also the house in which Lord Palmerston lived and died, now the Naval and Military Club. On the south side one of Wren's most beautiful churches, that of St. James, sedately watches the congested traffic and the gay crowds, not a stone's throw from the very centre of gaiety, Piccadilly Circus. Not far off is the famous shop known to many generations of Londoners as Fortnum and Mason's. It has been here since 1756.

The next road leads under the great Admiralty arch along the straight half-mile of the Mall to the Queen Victoria Memorial. This is London's processional road and some would wish that the palace which justifies it were more worthy of the place of honour in a fine scheme. But it must be admitted that Buckingham Palace is dull. Its finest architectural feature, the Marble Arch, was long since removed and now stands uncomfortably in Oxford Street as the centre of a traffic circus and leading nowhere.

Back at Charing Cross the broad and brilliantly lighted road running due south takes us through the site of the palace of Whitehall, now covered with Government buildings. On the east side the only

one of note is the Banqueting Hall. The two terraces of unlovely houses, Richmond Terrace and Whitehall Gardens, all occupied by Government departments, are due for early removal. On the west side are much more interesting buildings of all periods, running in chronological sequence from north to south. First comes the Admiralty with its Adam screen, built in 1745, and now enormously enlarged by the great building that thrusts westwards towards the park. The Horse Guards was built by Kent in 1751, and has a beautifully designed clock turret. Next to it is Dover House (1758) now the Scottish Office, offering an appropriately forbidding aspect. It belonged to the Duke of York, whose column is not far off, and opposite to it once stood Holbein's gate into the palace. Next is the Treasury, corner-stone of the administrative system. The dignified front we see was built by Barry in 1847, and behind is some of the old building Kent put up in 1733 over the demolished site of the cockpit, which was such a source of delight to Charles II's gay court, and even some remains of Henry VIII's palace. Beyond the Treasury, Downing Street turns off, and at its end stands the house where for the last two hundred years the destinies of the British Empire have been woven. The Prime Minister's house, and that next to it, generally occupied by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, are austere plain and seem to embody what we were once accustomed to regard as our national characteristic—reticence and an intense dislike of show—no Continental nation would think of housing the head of its Government so shabbily; and of that we were very proud. On the

farther side of Downing Street, Parliament Street begins, with the great block of offices completed in 1873. They comprise the Home Office, Foreign Office, Dominions and Colonial Offices, and the India Office. Sir Gilbert Scott submitted a Gothic design for this to Palmerston, whose very unromantic mind insisted on a classical building. Scott utilized his rejected design for St. Pancras Hotel. Lastly comes the most modern building of all, completed from the design of J. M. Boyden in 1908 and housing the Ministries of Health and Education and the Office of Works.

From the corner which we have now reached the finest group of buildings in London, hardly to be matched in any city of the world, fills the eye. The new and the venerable there mingle in perfect harmony; the neo-Gothic splendours of Barry's palace respond to the authentic Gothic of the Abbey.

The old Palace of Westminster in which Parliament met was burnt down in 1834. It was only two years after the passing of the Reform Bill, the first step towards an entire change in the character of that assembly. Thereupon arose great contention between the two architectural schools as to the style in which it was to be rebuilt. The proximity of the Abbey and of Westminster Hall determined the question in favour of the Gothic. Sir Charles Barry was commissioned to draw up the plans, and the present magnificent pile of buildings is the result. It was completed in 1867 at a cost of £3,000,000. Seen from the Abbey churchyard just to the north of Henry VII's chapel, its complete accord with that building is obvious. The enriched perpendicular

panels and mouldings and the niched statues which adorn its face were the work of Augustus Pugin, that strange and wayward mediævalist born out of due time. All that is left of the palace itself is incorporated in this vast building. There is the crypt of St. Stephen's Chapel, portions of cloisters, and the great Hall itself, the Hall which has been the stage for some of the most dramatic scenes in London's history, the Hall "which had witnessed the just sentence of Bacon and the just absolution of Somers, where the eloquence of Strafford had for a moment awed and melted a victorious party inflamed with just resentment, the Hall where Charles had confronted the High Court of Justice, with the placid courage that has half redeemed his fame";<sup>1</sup> where Burke, Fox, and Sheridan "managed" the indictment of Warren Hastings.

The group is completed by the fifteenth-century church of St. Margaret, the mother church of the great parish of Westminster, nestling as for protection against the mighty Abbey.

The next spoke from the hub of Charing Cross is Northumberland Avenue, a street driven through the grounds of Northumberland House, pulled down in 1874 to make a road to the new Victoria Embankment opened in 1870. This remarkable work narrowed the Thames from a width of 450 to 200 feet. On the mud flats thus reclaimed was made a grand curving road for a length of 2300 yards, backed by gardens and leaving high and dry the few remaining water gates and Somerset House with its large iron mooring rings. The only other

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay: *Warren Hastings*.

building of interest is Norman Shaw's beautiful New Scotland Yard, the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police. It was built in 1891 in a style referred to as "Scottish Baronial." Sir Joseph Bazalgette was the architect of the Embankment, and the cost £2,000,000. The great scheme was completed by cutting Queen Victoria Street from its eastern end through immemorial city lanes to the Bank.

The only other great civic undertaking which distinguished the arid years of the last half of the nineteenth century, when London was filling up and spreading in all directions, unregulated and uncared for, was the Holborn Viaduct (1869), which bridged the old Fleet valley from Holborn to Newgate Street.

These improvements were paid for from the old wine and corn dues which the city had been empowered to levy by Edward III—and which were then abolished—while the Regent Street and Trafalgar Square schemes were paid for by the State. What the Metropolitan Board of Works, which then governed London, accomplished unaided may be seen in Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road, two cheap and badly planned arteries lined by some of the meanest-looking buildings in London. A new conception of the duty of Londoners towards their noble city was introduced by the London County Council when it planned the great scheme by which a mass of time-honoured but mostly unpleasant streets and alleys between Holborn and the Strand were swept away and replaced by the fine straight thoroughfare inappropriately called Kingsway, rest-



ing on a semicircular road for which the ancient name of Aldwych was most felicitously revived.

Aldwych leads us into the next street radiating from Charing Cross, the Strand, which we have seen developing from a muddy lane to a thoroughfare lined with noblemen's palaces. It became in the nineteenth century the most thronged and busy street in the metropolis, the centre of its pleasure life, and the great traffic artery from the city to Westminster, displacing Father Thames. The traffic on the river is now almost entirely confined to barges gliding solemnly behind the puffing tugs to and from the docks, and the Strand is undergoing a further change; its homely and intimate shops and eating-houses have been destroyed to make room for a wide modern thoroughfare, whereby it gains in convenience but loses in character. Spared by all the improvements are the two very London-like churches in the middle of the Strand. St. Clement Danes is by Wren and its name reminds us of the colony of Danes which was allowed to settle here, outside the city, in Saxon times. St. Mary le Strand is the church in which Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, disguised and in hiding, renounced the Catholic faith, while of the earliest church on this site Thomas à Becket was the rector. London would have been grieved to lose these two notable monuments of her past history. Farther east rises the Royal Courts of Justice, where once stood the tilt-yard of the Templars and, later, the little fish shop owned by Crockford, the founder of the most famous of all the eighteenth-century gambling houses. This is the last great building of Gothic

style to be put up in London. Its architect was G. E. Street. It was completed in 1882, when all legal business was transferred from Westminster Hall to this new palace of justice.

Close by is London's greatest historical treasure, the two volumes of the Conqueror's Domesday Book, now displayed in the little museum of the Record Office, once the Rolls Chapel, a museum very imperfectly appreciated by London citizens, who there may contemplate, with such interest as they are capable of, documents in the handwriting of monarchs and statesmen which are amongst the main sources of the stream of London's history.

### *A NOTE ON LONDON'S GOVERNMENT*

WHETHER or not London's system of government had its roots in the Roman occupation, when it is first seen taking shape in the charter of Henry I (see page 21), it had a very definite mediæval character, a character which it has never lost; and its development can be continuously traced throughout the succeeding eight centuries. But that system has remained confined to the very small part of modern London which was the city in Plantagenet and in Roman days. With the enormous growth of the area inhabited by its citizens came the necessity of bringing it under an orderly, stable and modern form of government. The city system was apparently incapable of expansion and remains,

now, crystallized in the midst of vigorous modern administrative units, something of an archaic survival, the end of which would be of comparatively small consequence administratively, though a loss to those who value a continuous tradition and cling to the maintenance of customs which take us back to a less sophisticated and unmechanized age. Fundamental human needs have not changed in eight hundred years and the study of the institutions of a more primitive age is rewarded with finds of inestimable value in the solution of modern problems.

Under the Anglo-Saxon kings London was governed by the portreeve and bishop, but, with the anti-clerical tendencies of the Norman kings, the latter seems gradually to have been pushed back to his ecclesiastical province, while the former was selected by the monarch. A step towards democratic government appears in the charter of Henry I who conceded to the citizens the right of electing their own shire-reeve (sheriff). At this time the municipal system corresponded to that of the counties and hundreds. "The churches had their sokes, the barons their manors and the people—at least those who were free of the city—had their folk-mote answering to the shire-mote elsewhere; their ward-mote, answering to the hundred court; and their weekly hustings, a general meeting of the citizens which developed, or dwindled, into the so-called 'county court.'"<sup>1</sup>

The great step forward towards self-government was made when the citizens secured a *commune* as the

price of their support of John against Longchamp (see page 32). "The keynote of the *commune* was that it was not granted by way of charter," says Sir Laurence Gomme. In this matter the city was following a fashion which had spread over France and Western Europe, and their new head bore a French title, "mayor." He was assisted by a body of twelve aldermen and twelve "other men of probity." The aldermen were probably selected from the aldermen of the wards into which the city was then (and is still) divided and the whole body is the germ of the Common Council. Though they were now made free of the king—"Come what may the Londoners shall have no king but their mayor," said an excited citizen—the government of the city was still essentially aristocratic. The wards represented the estates or sokes of the great city magnates, aldermanship descended from father to son, and they most of them belonged to a religious fraternity known as the "Knightengild." The Government resembled an oligarchy rather than a democracy. The names of several great families occur over and over again in the mediæval documents, in which London is richer than any other city, many of them being perpetuated in the names of city streets. Thus Bucklersbury is named from a prominent family of merchants, the Bukerels; the wards of Farringdon Within and Without include the ancient estates of the family of Farringdon, while Basinghall Street contained the "principal house of the Basings." Lothbury commemorates Albert of Lotharingia and (Laurence) Pountney Hill recalls another great family.

The first mayor, Henry Fitz-Ailwyne, was the head of one of the greatest of the governing families and the heir of the existing portreeve. He was called "of Lundenston" because his house was in the parish of St. Swithin near that unique monument (see pages 14, 56). He held office for twenty-five years. The sheriffs now ceased to be the rulers of the city and became merely the financial representatives of the citizens in London and Middlesex,<sup>1</sup> and the practice by which aldermen bought or inherited their offices began to die out.

But it was some time before the mayoralty attained the strength and inspired the confidence with which for many centuries now it has been associated. The governance of the city fell into disrepute. The streets were unlighted and unpaved, and full of refuse; murders and riots were constant incidents. In face of these evils Edward I adopted a course which has become familiar in modern times in the United States and in Ireland, when municipal administration has become inefficient. He appointed a "City Manager"—a "custos" or warden, who superseded the mayor for the time being and who was definitely charged with the duty of bringing order into the city, being entrusted with arbitrary powers for this purpose. Great reforms were instituted; the streets were cleaned, legal procedure regularized and the boundaries and government of the wards permanently fixed. A general cleaning up having been effected the mayoralty was restored

<sup>1</sup> See page 21. London was only deprived of its right of jurisdiction over Middlesex by the Local Government Act of 1888, which created the County Councils.

(1297). By the next century the governance of the city had assumed the character it has ever since maintained, the functionaries being the Mayor, the Court of Aldermen and the Common Council. When the mayor began to be called the Lord mayor is not known. The title was never conferred upon him officially, but it gradually became customary to address him thus.

The curious thing is that the jurisdiction of the City Fathers was never extended as the city extended. The reason for this is to be found in the ring of ecclesiastical estates that surrounded the city.<sup>1</sup> It was not only the broad lands of the great conventual houses which occupied the wide spaces without the city walls. The manors with which the prebendal stalls of St. Paul had been endowed occupied large stretches of the north and west such as Islington, Finsbury, Holborn, St. Pancras and Willesden. In these the powerful ecclesiastical interests would not tolerate the jurisdiction of the city, and separate villages grew up owning allegiance to their religious superiors alone. When the Reformation came and these estates were confiscated the powers which had belonged to the Church were transferred to nobles and parvenus, who were just as jealous of their rights. "When at last it became impossible any longer to withhold an orderly and unified government for this vast unit, the mediæval hierarchy which had continued to rule the city had become too archaic to be adapted to that purpose, and an entirely new system had to be evolved."

Thus, as the city population shrank and as its

<sup>1</sup> See Loftie: *London (Historic Towns)*.

units flowed out into the neighbouring villages and towns, gradually filling up the gaps and creating a homogeneous town, they left behind them the highly developed and generally efficient government they had been used to and found their interests watched over by vestries, which worked through unpaid officials, the parish constable, the surveyor of highways and the overseers of the poor; varied by district boards and commissioners (of sewers, paving, etc.). By 1801, when this movement had been going on for a century, the population of London with its immediate suburbs (the present County of London) was 830,000; that of the city was 128,000. By 1889 the respective figures were 4,000,000 and 40,000. It is not necessary to follow the long agitation which led to the creation of the London County Council in 1889. The chaotic condition of the huge town under the unco-ordinated system of administration prevailing may be gathered from these extracts from a speech by Sir Benjamin Hall in introducing the Bill for reform.

"The case of the Strand was exceedingly singular. There were in the whole of the Strand union eleven miles of streets over which no less than seven different paving boards, each with its establishment of clerks, collectors, surveyors and other officers, had jurisdiction; and to show in what manner the officers were appointed, it is only necessary to observe that one of the surveyors was, when appointed, a tailor, and another a law stationer. The cost to the ratepayers of maintaining the official staff attached to these boards was £88 per mile." In St. Pancras, "there are 472 commissioners, of whom

255 are self-elected. They have set up fourteen public pumps for the use of 170,000 inhabitants, of which one is returned as out of order."<sup>1</sup>

The first step taken towards unification was the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855 for certain common purposes, especially main drainage. Its members were elected by the city corporation; the vestries of the twenty-three larger parishes and the fourteen district boards under which the smaller parishes had been grouped. The Board of Works did some excellent work, especially in the creation of London's magnificent main drainage system; but in time this indirectly elected body became tainted with inefficiency and even corruption, and the creation of a strong representative and democratic body for the whole of London became inevitable and pressing.

In 1888 an act was passed creating the London County Council, to be elected on a wide democratic franchise. Even then, so strong was the city corporation, and so tenacious of its privileges, that it was left a separate body; and we thus get the curious spectacle of a city within a city, the latter with the status of a county. And two of the most important municipal functions—education and the relief of the poor—were left outside the purview of the Council. These services were controlled, the one by the London School Board, a highly efficient body created so recently as 1869, and the other by the ancient Boards of Guardians and the modern Metropolitan Asylums Board. In course of time, as was inevitable, their duties were also merged in the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Sir Percy Harris, in *London and its Government*.



London County Council, the former in 1904, the latter in 1930.

It was, of course, impossible for the Council to undertake all the detailed local work performed by the vestries, neither could those obscure bodies any longer be left responsible for the lighting, cleansing and housing of the large and important townships which they so imperfectly represented. So the structure of London's government was completed by the creation in 1899 of the London boroughs, based on the old parishes and corresponding generally with the parliamentary boroughs. The County of London may thus be regarded as consisting of twenty-nine contiguous towns on which the powers and duties requiring uniformity of action are entrusted to the County Council and those that can be locally administered to the Borough Councils.

The County Council first met on 31st January 1889 and its first chairman was Lord Rosebery, whose personality and social and political position at once gave the Council that prestige which it needed, and whose deep interest in the great experiment and real administrative ability helped in starting the Council on those admirably efficient and businesslike lines on which it has ever since carried on its work, digesting with the greatest ease all the intricate work which has gradually been thrust upon it.

One thing remained, to find a fitting home for the Council, its committees and its enormous staff (which now numbers three thousand). The occasion found the man. Ralph Knott was the young architect who designed the beautiful riverside

palace with the curved façade and steep red roof which now adorns the bank of the river opposite to that on which stands the Royal Palace of Westminster; the centre of the administration of the ancient realm of Britain facing that of its great capital.

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